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# MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

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"HAMLET," "MACBETH," ETC.

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## GENERAL PREFACE.

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IN this edition of SHAKESPEARE an attempt is made to present the greater plays of the dramatist in their literary aspect, and not merely as material for the study of philology or grammar. Criticism purely verbal and textual has only been included to such an extent as may serve to help the student in the appreciation of the essential poetry. Questions of date and literary history have been fully dealt with in the Introductions, but the larger space has been devoted to the interpretative rather than the matter-of-fact order of scholarship. Aesthetic judgments are never final, but the Editors have attempted to suggest points of view from which the analysis of dramatic motive and dramatic character may be profitably undertaken. In the Notes likewise, while it is hoped that all unfamiliar expressions and allusions have been adequately explained, yet it has been thought even more important to consider the dramatic value of each scene, and the part which it plays in relation to the whole. These general principles are common to the whole series; in detail each Editor is alone responsible for the play or plays that have been intrusted to him.

Every volume of the series has been provided with a Glossary, an Essay upon Metre, and an Index; and Appendices have been added upon points of special interest, which could not conveniently be treated in the Introduction or the Notes. The text is based by the several Editors on that of the *Globe* edition: the only omissions made are those that are unavoidable in an edition likely to be used by young students.

By the systematic arrangement of the introductory matter, and by close attention to typographical details, every effort has been made to provide an edition that will prove convenient in use.





# CONTENTS

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	Page
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	7
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ - - - - -	28
A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM - - - - -	29
NOTES - - - - -	82
APPENDIX A—THE FAIRY WORLD - - - - -	134
APPENDIX B—THE TWO QUARTOS OF 1600 - - - - -	153
APPENDIX C—ON THE WEATHER OF 1594 - - - - -	154
APPENDIX D—THE LIFE OF THESEUS - - - - -	156
APPENDIX E—ON THE LEGEND OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE - - - - -	159
APPENDIX F—ON THE PLAY OF “NARCISSUS” - - - - -	163
APPENDIX G—ON THE ALLEGORY IN ii. 1. 148-168 - - - - -	164
APPENDIX H—ON WILLIAM STANLEY, SIXTH EARL OF DERBY - - - - -	164
APPENDIX I—ON W. BETTIE'S TITANIA AND THESEUS - - - - -	165
ESSAY ON METRE - - - - -	167
GLOSSARY - - - - -	184
INDEX OF WORDS - - - - -	193
GENERAL INDEX - - - - -	195



# INTRODUCTION.

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## I. LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

The Registers of the Company of Stationers for the year 1600 contain, amongst other entries of books "allowed to be printed", the following:

Entry in the  
Stationers'  
Register,  
Oct. 8th, 1600.

8 Octobris

Thomas ffysher Entred for his Copie vnder the handes of master Rodes and the Wardens. A booke called *A mydsommer nightes Dreame* vjd.

During the same year, that is, before March 25, 160<sup>9</sup><sub>1</sub>, two editions of the play in Quarto form appeared. A careful comparison has established the fact that the earliest of these, known as the First Quarto, or Q 1, is that which has the following title-page:—

The First  
(Fisher's)  
Quarto of 1600.

"[Ornament] | A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath  
beene sundry times pub- | *lickely acted by the Right*  
*honoura-* | ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his | *seruants.* |  
*Written by William Shakespeare.* | [Fisher's device: a  
kingfisher] | ¶ Imprinted at London, for *Thomas Fisher*,  
and are to | be sould at his shoppe, at the Signe of the  
White Hart, | in *Fleete streete.* 1600."

This is often called Fisher's Quarto.

The Second Quarto, known also as Q 2 or Roberts' Quarto, is a reprint, page for page, of Q 1. The typographical details are better arranged, the spelling is less archaic, a few misprints are corrected, and a somewhat more than compensating number of errors have been allowed to creep in. The title-page runs as follows:—

The Second  
(Roberts')  
Quarto of 1600.

“[Ornament] | A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath beene sundry times pub- | *likely acted, by the Right Honoura- | ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his | seruants. | Written by William Shakespeare. |* [Roberts’ device: the Geneva Arms: a Half-Eagle and Key.] | *Printed by Iames Roberts, 1600.”*

It has been thought that Roberts’ edition was merely a pirated version of that published by Fisher; but on the whole it appears more likely that Fisher, who was not himself a printer as well as a publisher, got the second edition, if not the first also, printed for him by Roberts, who was both; and that the issue of two editions in six months was simply due to the success of the play. No third edition was, however, printed before the great collection of all Shakespeare’s plays, known as the First Folio (F 1) of 1623. The version of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream* there given appears to have been printed from a copy of Q 2 kept for use in the library of the theatre. This is shown by the fact that the stage-directions which it contains are more numerous and elaborate than those given in either of the Quartos, and were evidently written for practical use.<sup>1</sup> The text of the First Folio was reproduced in the Second, Third, and Fourth Folios of 1632 (F 2), 1664 (F 3), and 1685 (F 4).

The text of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream* has come down to us in a singularly perfect state. This is probably due to the First Quarto having been originally printed from a clear and authentic manuscript. The slight variations introduced from time to time in the later editions do not appear to rest upon any independent authority. When they are not mere mistakes, they are only conjectural emendations of the printer or editor. Sometimes, of course, they happily correct a slip in the First Quarto.

The date of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream* has given rise to more than the usual amount of vain imaginings. The only

<sup>1</sup> See the notes on iii. 2. 415, 418, 463; v. 1. 128. A fuller account of the two Quartos, and of their relations to the First Folio, is given in Appendix B.

precise external indication which we have to go upon is the mention of the play in the list of Shakespeare's comedies given in Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia*, which was entered in the Stationers' Register on September 7, 1598. Later than 1598, therefore, it cannot be, but in attempting to fix a year in the previous decade we have only internal evidence to go upon. Several passages in the text have been taken hold of by one critic or another as containing some contemporary allusion which might yield such evidence. Most of them will not bear serious discussion;<sup>1</sup> and a careful consideration of all which are of any real importance, together with the arguments, less easily stated but not less cogent, which can be derived from the thought and style of the play, leads me to the belief that the probable date is to be found in the winter of 1594-5. I will now attempt to justify this conclusion.

Date of the Play: mentioned in *Palladis Tamia*, 1598.

Probable Date: the winter of 1594-5.

Amongst the entertainments proposed for Theseus' wedding eve in act v. is included—

"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death  
Of learning, late deceased in beggary" (v. i. 52-53).

This passage can hardly refer, as has been suggested, to the death of Spenser, for that did not take place until 1599, and was most probably not 'in beggary' at all. It might possibly refer to the death of Robert Greene in 1592. Greene was learned, *utriusque Academiae in Artibus Magister*, and he certainly died in extreme want. But then Greene was almost certainly no friend of Shakespeare's, and as will be seen presently, it is just possible that he is caricatured, rather than complimented, in this very play.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Theseus says of the

The Allusion to the Death of Learning in v. i. 52.

<sup>1</sup> See the notes on the supposed imitations of or allusions to *The Faerie Queene*, Bk. vi. (1596) in ii. 1. 5, Lodge's *Wit's Miserie and the World's Madness* (1596) in v. 1. 11, and *The Wisdome of Doctor Dodypoll* (1600) in ii. 1. 14.

<sup>2</sup> See the note on iv. 1. 210. Mr. Fleay is of opinion that in Bottom and his fellows Shakespeare satirized the Earl of Sussex' Players, with whom Greene apparently became connected after the decay of the Queen's Company, and who probably produced his *George a Greene*. These men appeared once, and once only, at court, on Jan. 2, 1592, and acted at the Rose in the spring of 1593.

proposed performance, "This is some satire, sharp and critical";<sup>1</sup> and therefore it seems most likely that Shakespeare had in his mind those elaborate complaints, often allegorical, of the neglect of learning, which were so fashionable in Elizabeth's reign. And if so, he probably took the hint for his title from Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*, a poem of just this sort, which was published among the *Complaints* of 1591.<sup>2</sup> In any case, it is clear that whatever the point of the allusion may be, it does not bring us so far on as 1594.

The passage which primarily suggests this date is that in act ii. sc. 1. 81-117, where Titania describes at great length a season of extraordinarily bad weather. Now it so happens that we have several contemporary descriptions of a quite exceptionally wet and cold summer which occurred in this year of 1594, descriptions which in many points appear to echo Titania's very words.<sup>3</sup> It goes, of course, without saying that Shakespeare might perfectly well have described a rainy season without the slightest reference to the year in which he was writing, or to any other year in particular. At the same time, such a passage would have had its special point for the audience in or immediately after 1594, and it is worth noting that, looked on merely as part of the play, it is somewhat irrelevant and even dramatically out of place; for the larger part of the action is carried on out of doors, and clearly demands fair weather. On the whole, the coincidence appears to me at least to raise a presumption in favour of the proposed date, provided that it is in other respects acceptable.

A third allusion also tells in favour of 1594, and, moreover, points distinctly to the latter part of that year. In act i. sc. 2 and in act iii. sc. 1, there is some alarm amongst the clowns lest that "fearful wild fowl", the lion, should frighten the

<sup>1</sup> If the allusion is to Greene, perhaps Shakespeare was thinking of the unfair attack made on him after his death by Gabriel Harvey.

<sup>2</sup> I do *not* suggest that Shakespeare is returning a compliment paid him as "pleasant Willy" in the *Tears of the Muses*. Willy may be Sidney, or he may be Lyly; but what is said of him is quite inconsistent with Shakespeare's position even in 1591, still more at the earlier date at which the poem appears to have been written.

<sup>3</sup> I have reprinted these descriptions from Stowe's *Annals* and elsewhere in Appendix C.

ladies. It can hardly be doubted that this is a reminiscence of what actually happened in the Scottish court at the baptism of Prince Henry on August 30th, 1594, when a triumphal car "should have been drawn in by a lion, but because his presence might have brought some fear to the nearest, or that the sight of the lights and torches might have commoved his tameness, it was thought meet that the Moor should supply that room".<sup>1</sup>

The Allusion  
to the Lion at  
Edinburgh in  
i. 2. and iii. 1.

This same date of 1594-5 seems to me to suit admirably with the character and style of the play. It clearly belongs to the earliest group of Shakespeare's comedies.

It abounds with rhyme, with strained conceits, with antithesis and other rhetorical devices.

Aesthetic Evi-  
dence as to the  
Date.

The blank verse is far more regular and monotonous than that of any of the later plays: the use of trisyllabic feet, of run-on lines, of broken lines, of feminine endings, of the countless other devices by which Shakespeare gradually came to give infinite variety to his rhythm, is as yet timid and rare.<sup>2</sup> Then, again, the interest of character is very slight. Bottom is a masterpiece and Theseus a clever sketch, but how wooden are the rest compared with the living figures of *The Merchant of Venice*, which probably dates from 1596-7! Moreover, they fall naturally into pairs, with that antithetic grouping, which, like the antithetic rhythm, is so marked in Shakespeare's early work. On the other hand, if *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is compared with the other early comedies, with *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, it betrays in many ways a notable advance.<sup>3</sup> It is written with a firmer and less experimental hand, with a more daring use of materials, with a more striking mastery of poetic expression. And technically,

<sup>1</sup>An account of the ceremony was published at Edinburgh in 1594 (?). This was reprinted from the later edition of 1603 in Nichols' *Progresses of Elizabeth*, iii. 365.

<sup>2</sup> See the Essay on Metre, § 19.

<sup>3</sup> If the order of the plays were determined solely by the proportion of rhymed to unrhymed lines, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* would be the earliest but one, not the latest of its group. See Essay on Metre, § 17. But the test is fallible, and the exceptionally lyrical, masque-like character of the play fully accounts for the amount of rhyme.



too, the absence of doggerel rhyme from the comic scenes is a mark of development. If we make it one of the early group, but the last of that group, all the conditions of the problem are satisfied. Certain themes and situations are repeated from the earlier plays: thus the situation of the lovers before Theseus recalls that of Aegeon before the Duke in *The Comedy of Errors*; but the closest affinities in this respect are with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the play which on this hypothesis immediately preceded. In both, the interference of the claims of love with those of friendship forms an important element in the plot.<sup>1</sup>

But the chief advantage of dating *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* in 1594-5 is that it brings it into close neighbourhood

Affinities of  
the Play with  
*Richard II.*  
and *Romeo and*  
*Juliet.*

to *Richard II.* and to *Romeo and Juliet*. These three plays, a comedy, a history, and a tragedy, make up a well-defined group, all alike characterized by a markedly lyrical quality. They are

dramatic poems rather than dramas, and appear to point to an attempt, a transient attempt, of the poet to find dramatic value in painting the phases of emotion rather than the development of character.<sup>2</sup> The connection of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* with *Romeo and Juliet* is even closer: they are in some sort pendants to each other. Both deal directly with the same problem of the function of love in life: but whereas in the comedy, as will presently be shown, it is love the lawless, the misleader, that is put before us, the tragedy aims deeper and gives us love the redeemer, the reconciler. Finally, it may be pointed out that the fate of the "star-crossed lovers" creates a situation exactly parallel to that burlesqued in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Such evidence then as we can arrive at points to the winter of 1594-5 as the most probable date for the composition of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Bearing this in mind, we may consider the attempts that have been made to determine the precise occasion

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare's preoccupation with this theme at this period of his life should be read in the light afforded by the *Sonnets*.

<sup>2</sup> See the Introduction to my edition of *Richard II.* in the Falcon Series.

on which it was first presented. The character of the play is in some respects peculiar. In its wealth of dance and song, in its capacities for scenic effect, in its introduction of supernatural beings, it resembles, more than any other of Shakespeare's comedies, the type of the fashionable Elizabethan Masque. And in the juxtaposition of clowns and fairies we get just that favourite contrast of poetry and burlesque out of which Jonson afterwards developed the set form of the *Antimasque*.<sup>1</sup> Now Masques were distinctly aristocratic and not popular entertainments; they took place not on the public stages, but in the palace, or in the great halls of the Inns of Court or of private dwellings. They were especially in vogue at marriage festivities. Seeing that *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* deals with a marriage, and ends with what is practically an epithalamium, it is at least a plausible theory that it was written to grace the wedding night of some young noble. Moreover, in view of the graceful and extremely irrelevant compliment to Elizabeth which is inserted in act ii. sc. 1,<sup>2</sup> it is difficult not to suspect that the wedding in question was one at which the queen was herself present. The two occasions for which this extraordinary honour have been most often claimed are the marriage of the Earl of Essex to Frances Lady Sidney in 1590, and that of the Earl of Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon in 1598.<sup>3</sup> Both of these appear to me decidedly out of the question. Not only is the one too early and the other too late, but also they were both secret marriages, carefully concealed from the displeasure of the queen, and certainly not celebrated in her presence or likely to have been attended with any sumptuous festivities

<sup>1</sup> See the admirable sketch of the history of the Masque in Mr. Verity's Pitt Press edition of Milton's *Arcades and Comus*.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>3</sup> The two champions of the claims of Essex have been Elze in his *Essays on Shakespeare*, and Herman Kurz in the *Jahrbuch* (vol. iv.) of the German Shakespeare Society for 1869. Those of Southampton are supported by Mr. Gerald Massey in his *Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets* and earlier work. Mr. Massey interprets the whole plot as referring to the rivalry for Southampton's affections between Elizabeth Vernon and Penelope Rich. A pretty show for a wedding night! But then Elze finds in the Ariadne and Perigenia passage an allusion to Essex' past amours!

at all. We owe a much more likely suggestion to Mr. Fleay.

On January 26th, 1594,<sup>1</sup> William Stanley, Earl of Derby, married Elizabeth Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford. The wedding took place at the Court at Greenwich, and therefore almost certainly in the presence of Elizabeth. Lord Derby, like all the Stanleys, was interested in the drama (see Appendix H), and it is worth noting that the very company to which Shakespeare belonged had been up to his death, on April 16th of the previous year, the servants of his elder brother and predecessor, Ferdinando. Yet one more point. I have explained the allusion to the "thrice three Muses" as referring to Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*. But why, writing in 1594-5, should Shakespeare refer pointedly to a poem published so far back as 1591? The present hypothesis affords an answer. An honoured guest at William Stanley's wedding would be the widow of Ferdinando, Alice, dowager-Countess of Derby. And the allusion to Spenser's poem would be a compliment to her, for to her, Spenser's cousin, and then Lady Strange, it had been originally dedicated in 1591.<sup>2</sup>

We have passed into the region of conjecture. The dating of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* in 1594-5 I regard as fairly certain; but I do not pretend to do more than guess at the actual occasion upon which it was performed. Whatever this occasion may have been, we know from the Qq. that the play was performed "publickely" before it was printed in 1600. There are certain indications which make me think that it was also at some period slightly retouched. Two passages, iii. 2. 177-343 and v. 1. 1-105, show a markedly larger proportion of feminine endings than the rest of the play.<sup>3</sup> In the earlier

The Play possibly retouched at a later date.

1 This is the date given for the event in Stowe's *Annals*. All the peerages give it, probably copying each other, as 26th June, 1594. Of course this brings us temptingly near to Midsummer Day (June 24th), but then it would be too early for the allusion to the lion at Prince Henry's christening on August 30th.

2 If this hypothesis has anything in it, Lady Derby will have received special honour from the three greatest poets of two centuries: for it was for her, in her old age, that Milton's masque of *Arcades* was written.

3 See Essay on Metre, §§. 13, 16,

passages, this may be due merely to the excited state of the speakers, but I cannot resist the suspicion that the opening of act v. shows some traces of later work. Perhaps in its original form, it was even more personal to the Stanley family than it is now.

The later history of the play is not without its points of interest. It appears to have been performed on Sunday, 27th September, 1631, in the house of John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln. This performance on the Sabbath gave great offence to the Puritans, and there exist among Laud's papers (*Lambeth MS.* 1030, arts. 4, 5) two documents referring to the matter. One is a letter of reproof from John Spencer, a Puritanical preacher, to a lady who was amongst the audience. The other is a burlesque order or decree of this same John Spencer, condemning the Bishop, and concluding as follows: "Likewise wee doe order, that Mr. Wilson, because hee was a speciall plotter and Contriver of this busines, and did in suche a brutishe manner acte the same with an Asses head, therefore hee shall uppon Tuisday next, from 6 of the Clocke in the Morning till sixe of the Clocke at night sitt in the Porters Lodge at my Lords Bishoppes house with his feete in the stocks and Attyred with his Asse head, and a bottle of haye sett before him, and this superscripcion on his breast—

'Good people I have played the beast  
And brought ill things to passe  
I was a man, but thus have made  
Myselfe a Silly Asse'".

Some later hand has written upon the document "the play M. Night Dr.", and one cannot doubt that this is correct.<sup>1</sup>

After the suppression of the theatres, the play was abridged into a farce or droll, under the title of *The Merry Conceited Humours of Bottom the Weaver*, which seems to have been acted in private. This was printed in 1661, and again

<sup>1</sup> Spencer refers again to the event in his *Discourse of Divers Petitions* (1641), p. 19, and speaks of Wilson as "a Cunning Musition". I suppose he was Dr. John Wilson whose *Psalterium Carolinum* was published in 1657, and *Cheerful Airs or Ballads* in 1660.

amongst other drolls in Kirkman's *Wits, or Sport upon Sport* (1672). The original play was restored to the stage at the Restoration, when Pepys saw it, and commented as follows, under the date Sept. 29, 1662:—"To the King's Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life". In 1692 it was converted into an opera, with music by Purcell, and numerous additional songs and other sophistications of the text. This and other adaptations continued to be acted until the present century, when a purer text was restored. Mendelssohn's famous music was written in 1826, and performed at a revival of the play under the direction of Tieck at Berlin in the following year.

The play occupies a considerable place in the history of fairy literature. To it and to the description of Queen Mab in *The Merchant of Venice*, Drayton's *Nymphidia*, the fairy poems in Herrick's *Hesperides* and Randolph's *Amyntas* owe their inspiration. The figure of Robin Goodfellow became a popular one in ballad and chap-book. Besides the prose *Life of Robin Goodfellow* (1628) there exist two or three ballads, one of which has been attributed without much authority to Ben Jonson. The same poet modelled upon *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* his *Masque of Oberon, or the Satyr*. Still earlier, the curious anonymous play of *Narcissus, A Twelfth Night Merriment*,<sup>1</sup> and W. Percy's *Fairy Pastoral, or Forest of Elves*, in which Oberon is introduced,<sup>2</sup> show marked traces of the same influence. Finally, Mr. Verity, in his admirable edition of the play, has called attention to the frequent reminiscences of it that are scattered through the poems of Milton.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>2</sup> This play was edited by Hazlewood for the Roxburghe Club (1824) from a MS. at Alnwick Castle.

<sup>3</sup> There is a careful study of Shakespeare's imitators in C. C. Hense's *Untersuchungen und Studien* (1884). See also Appendix A.

## II. SOURCE OF THE PLOT.

So far as we know, Shakespeare was not indebted to any single model for the plot of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. It combines situations and motives gathered from widely different sources, and welded together by the incomparable art of the poet. But clearly the framework of the story, so far as it centres in Theseus, is adapted from the *Knight's Tale* of Chaucer. In the tale, as in the play, the action has its rise in the celebration of Theseus' wedding; there, too, the characters go forth to "doon their observance to May", and there the theme of friendship broken across by love is illustrated in Palamon and Arcite, as here, though differently, in Hermia and Helena. Several slighter parallels of incident and phrase are recorded in the notes.<sup>1</sup> Other facts with regard to Theseus Shakespeare probably obtained from the *Life of Theseus* in Sir Thomas North's translation of *Plutarch's Lives* (1579). I have thought it well to reprint all the passages from which he appears to have borrowed anything in Appendix D.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe was a familiar one to Elizabethan readers. Shakespeare probably read it in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, iv. 55-166, or in the translation of that poem by Arthur Golding (1565). Chaucer included the *Legend of Thisbe of Babylon* in his *Legend of Good Women*; and the Stationers' Registers for 1562 record a license to William Greffeth "for pryntynge of a boke intituled Perymus and Thesbye". A poem on the subject in Clement Robinson's *A Handefull of Pleasant Delites* (1584), by I. Thomson, has some verbal resemblances

<sup>1</sup> See notes to i. 1. 16, 167; iii. 2. 338; iv. 1. 116; v. 1. 51. *The Knight's Tale* had already been dramatized in Richard Edwardes' *Palamon and Arcite*, as it was afterwards by Fletcher, together, as many think, with Shakespeare himself, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The relation of Shakespeare's plot to that of Chaucer has been worked out by L. Proescholdt, *On the Sources of Midsummer-Night's Dream* (1878), and B. Ten Brink in the *Jahrbuch*, xiii. 92.

<sup>2</sup> See also Appendix I on the connection of Titania and Theseus.

to Shakespeare's burlesque. It will be found, with Golding's version, in Appendix E.<sup>1</sup>

Two sources have been suggested for the incident of the love-juice. In neither case, I think, is the suggestion very convincing. One is Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, in which Pluto and Proserpina, who answer as elf-king and elf-queen to Oberon and Titania, magically restore the sight of an old man, in order that he may witness his wife's frailty.<sup>2</sup> The other is an episode in the Spanish *Diana Enamorada* of the Portuguese Jorge de Montemayor (circ. 1512-62). In this a charm is used to transfer the affections of an amorous shepherd from one object to another, much as the affections of Demetrius and Lysander are transferred in the play.<sup>3</sup> The English translation of the *Diana Enamorada* by Bartholomew Yong was not published until 1598, but in the preface it is stated to have been written sixteen years before, and therefore Shakespeare may have seen it in manuscript. Further, a play called *The History of Felix and Philomena*, which was probably founded on Montemayor's romance, was acted at court in January, 1585. Whether in the original or in a translation, Shakespeare seems clearly to have used the *Diana Enamorada* as a source for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

The sources of Shakespeare's fairy-lore are set out at length in Appendix A.

### III. CRITICAL APPRECIATION.

*A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is a dramatic fantasy rather than a drama. It was written, in all probability, not for the public stage, but as an interlude in the festivities of some wedding at court. The conditions of its production were those of the Masque, and to the limits imposed by those conditions it was

The character of the Play that of a Masque, yet with the unity of a central idea.

<sup>1</sup> There is a complete account of the many versions of the legend in Dr. Georg Hart's *Die Pyramus-und-Thisbe Saga* (Passau, Part i. 1889, Part ii. 1891).

<sup>2</sup> L. Proescholdt, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> F. Krauss, *Eine Quelle zu Sh. Sommernachtstraum* (Jahrbuch, xi. 226).

bound to conform. Now the Masque, unlike the regular drama, was always presented with an abundance of scenery and stage accessories. It was light and amusing in character, making its principal appeal to the senses and the fancy of the audience. It had no need to touch the deeper springs of imagination, nor to win the attention of critical spectators. A profusion of dance and song, picturesque staging and pretty costumes, a sprinkling of courtly compliment, a piquant contrast of poetry and clowning, these things were enough for the entertainment of the nobles and the maids of honour who assembled at Gloriana's palace of Greenwich. These things, therefore, we find in full measure in the play. They give it its tone and dramatic character.<sup>1</sup> Yet the poet being Shakespeare, we do not, as in a modern burlesque, find these things and nothing more. For in Shakespeare the philosopher and the playwright go hand in hand; he will not write merely to enchant the eye and delight the ear, nor merely for the excitement of a good story, but always and at all times to utter forth the truth that is in him, to give dramatic form to significant ideas, ideas that are a criticism of life. And therefore we may be sure that at the heart even of a dramatic fantasy by Shakespeare, there will lie some such central idea, which will give an inner meaning and unity to the whole, without disturbing the madness of the fun and frolic. For this is perhaps the consummation of his art, to be a thinker without being pedantic, and while handling the deep themes of conduct and existence never to mount the stage in the inappropriate garb of the pulpit.

The vital question, then, for the student of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is: What did the poet mean by it? What central idea, over and above the poetry and the sensuous charm of the presentment, does it contain? We have seen that the plays which fall nearest to this in point of date are *Richard the Second*,

The Central  
Idea of the Play  
deals with Love.

<sup>1</sup> Probably there was even more singing and dancing in the play than the printed text indicates. See, e.g., the note on v. i. 386. I suspect, moreover, that the rhymed trochaic speeches assigned to the fairies were sung or given as recitative.



*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. In these we find the young poet concerning himself with the two subjects of perpetual interest to youth, Politics and Love. He has begun that great trilogy in which, under the guise of history, he purposed to deal with the central problem of politics as these presented themselves to a subject of the Tudors, the problem of the relation of king to people. Negatively in *Richard the Second* and *Henry the Fourth*, positively in *Henry the Fifth*, he works out, as Plato might have worked out, if he had written dramas, his conception of the essential nature of the genuine king.<sup>1</sup> Of his preoccupation with this theme we cannot but find a trace in our play in the character of Theseus, so obviously a sketch for the more finished picture of Henry the Fifth, the broadly human king, the man of deeds not words, not too finely tempered to be in touch with his people, and in whom we recognize the leading features of Shakespeare's ideal of sovereignty. But the character of Theseus is only a side issue in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*: it is not there that we look for the key-note of the play. Outside the sphere of the Histories, we find Shakespeare at this time particularly absorbed in what, to all poets in all ages, has been more than the half of life, in the theme of love. It fills comedy and tragedy alike. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* he deals with the conflict in a life of the rival claims of love and friendship, a motive which, if we may trust the evidence of the *Sonnets*, had had for him already its intimate and personal application. This motive also recurs in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and to this we must presently return; but it is worth while first to look for a moment at Shakespeare's dramatic treatment of love in the two of his great tragedies which have love for their burden.

The Tragic  
treatment of  
Love in *Romeo  
and Juliet* and  
in *Antony and  
Cleopatra*.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, love is represented as the supreme power, imperious and resistless in its oncoming, which lays hold of two lives, and exalts them almost in a moment to the highest pitch of dignity of which human nature is

<sup>1</sup> See the introduction to my edition of *Richard II.* in the Falcon Series of the plays.

capable. Of a boy and a girl it makes a man and a woman ; it purifies and glorifies, reconciles and redeems; and is strong even from the grave to compose the ashes of an ancient feud. This is what Browning calls "One way of love". "Another way" Shakespeare ventured to paint, some ten years later, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the love that instead of elevating destroys, that by subtle sorceries ensnares to its undoing the conscience and the energies of a mighty spirit.

Now these two tragedies, though not written together, are complementary to each other: they both treat of love as an extremely serious thing, of high significance for Love and the Comic spirit. life, and closely interwoven with destiny. For in the character of a man's love, in its purity or its degradation, lies ultimately the secret of his success or failure. But *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is a comedy, and to the comic spirit this Proteus love betrays itself in quite another shape. It is no longer Dante's 'lord of terrible aspect' with whom we have to do, but rather the roguish little Cupid of Ovid, the irresponsible child-god, with his blinded eyes and his erring arrows. "Hast been in love?" says the young shepherd to the old one in *As You Like It*, then—

"How many actions most ridiculous  
Hast thou been drawn to by thy fantasy".

Love, as interpreted by the comic spirit, is a certain fine lunacy in the brain of youth; not an integral part of life, but a disturbing element in it. The lover is a being of strange caprices and strange infidelities, beyond the control of reason, and swayed with every gust of passion. He is at odds for the time with all the established order of things, a rebel against the authority of parents, a rebel against friendship, a rebel against his own vows. This is love as it figures in comedy, and in the presentation and analysis of this lies the point of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

Bearing then in mind this central idea of the lawlessness and the laughableness of love, let us observe Analysis of the Play. how carefully, for all the apparent whimsicality of structure, it is kept to the front in the working out of the

play. As is generally the case with Shakespeare's comedies, the plot is composed of several stories, which are woven together with remarkable ingenuity. There is the story of Theseus' Wedding, the story of the Athenian Lovers, the story of the Quarrel of Oberon and Titania, the story of the Handicraftsmen's Play, and finally the story or interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe. It is the first of these which serves as the link that holds all the rest together; for it is at Theseus' wedding that Hermia's fate is to be decided; it is to celebrate this that the fairies have come from the farthest steppe of India, and it is for this that Bottom and his fellows are painfully conning their interlude. But the most important story from the point of view of the central idea, and the one to which

The story of the  
Athenian  
Lovers.

most space is devoted, is that of the Athenian Lovers. As Ten Brink has pointed out in his excellent study of the play, the motive of this story is varied from that of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. In the *Knight's Tale* the friendship of Palamon and Arcite is broken by their common love for Emilia. This corresponds very closely to the relation of Proteus and Valentine in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. But both in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* Shakespeare has complicated the situation by introducing a second woman, and in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* he has still further modified it by making the broken friendship that of the women, not that of the men. In this friendship broken by love we get, then, one illustration of the central idea. But there are others in the story. There is Hermia's defiance of her father and of Athenian law for the sake of Lysander; and above all there is the extraordinary inconstancy which both Lysander and Demetrius display in the bestowal of their affections. Demetrius has deserted Helena for Hermia before the play begins; and in the course of the night in the wood, Lysander goes over to Helena and back to Hermia, and Demetrius in his turn goes back to Helena without any apparent rhyme or reason. Surely the central idea of the play is carried to a point that is almost farcical. At the crisis

of the play, when the cross-purposes are at their maddest, one can only re-echo Puck's criticism,

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

Of course, Shakespeare's treatment of his theme is symbolical, rather than psychological. In *Romeo and Juliet*, he shows us the difference which love makes, in the actual characters of the lovers as they blossom out before us. But it is a commonplace that the lovers of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* are but faintly sketched and barely differentiated. Helena is tall and dark and timid: Hermia is little and fair and shrewish. Demetrius is crabbed and Lysander is languid. It is difficult to say much more. They are but the abstract Hes and Shes of the conventional love-story. But this want of characterization is of little importance, because, which is by no means conventional, the story is told symbolically. The transferences of affection which form its principal revolutions are represented as due to supernatural agency, to the somewhat randomly exercised power of the fairies. Moreover, taking perhaps a hint from Lyly, Shakespeare invites us to consider the whole thing as a dream. This is the significance of the title. It is life seen through a glass darkly; such a vision of life as a man might have on Midsummer Night, the one season of the year around which Elizabethan superstition gathered most closely, when herbs were believed to have their especial virtues, and strange beings to be abroad. And yet it is not all a dream, or, if a dream, it is one which passes very easily into actual life. For these inconstances of which Oberon's love in idleness is the cause, are after all not really different in kind from the initial inconstancy of Demetrius to Helena, for which no such reason is proposed. And again, when Demetrius is by magic restored to his first love, the effects of this continue on into the waking life as a quite natural thing which provokes no amazement. So that in fact, as far as the story of the lovers is concerned, the introduction of the supernatural element does not bring about anything which would have been impossible or improbable without it. The magical "love in idleness" really does

nothing more than represent symbolically the familiar workings of actual love-in-idleness in the human heart. Boys in love change their minds just so, or almost just so, without any whisper of the fairies to guide them. Romeo left his Rosaline quite as suddenly as Lysander left his Hermia.

It will help us to see the point of the symbolism more precisely, if we consider what use Shakespeare habitually makes of the supernatural in his plays. Always, as it appears to me, he uses it in much the same way, not with a literal faith in the personages or the acts which he depicts, but symbolically as a recognition of a mystery, of an unexplained element in the ordinary course of human affairs on earth. It is his confession of ignorance, of the fact that just there he has come upon something which baffles analysis, something ultimate, which is, but which cannot be quite accounted for. Thus in *Macbeth* the witches symbolize the double mystery of temptation and of retribution;<sup>1</sup> in *The Tempest* the magic of Prospero and the spiritual forces which are at his beck and call symbolize the mystery of an overruling providence. Now, in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* the mystery, so to call it, the inexplicability which is bound up with the central idea of the play, is the existence of that freakish irresponsible element of human nature out of which, to the eye of the comic spirit, the ethical and emotional vagaries of lovers take their rise. And that this element does exist is recognized and emphasized by Shakespeare in his usual way when he takes the workings of it in the story and explains them symbolically as due to the interference of supernatural agency.

Now in human life the disturbing element of love in idleness is generally only a passing fever. There is a period of *Sturm und Drang*, and then the man or woman begins to take life seriously, and is ready to submit to its discipline and to accept its reasonable responsibilities. And so by the side of Lysander and Demetrius we have the grave figure of the Athenian duke, Theseus. Theseus has had his wayward youth; he

The story of  
Theseus'  
Wedding.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 22 of my edition of *Macbeth* in this series.

has "played with light loves in the portal", with Perigenia and Aegles and the rest, ay, and in the glimmering night even with Queen Titania herself. Moreover, in his passion for Hippolyta he has approached her through deeds of violence; he has "won her love, doing her injuries". But now, like the Henry the Fifth of whom he is a prototype, he has put away childish things; he stands forth as the serene law-abiding king, no less than the still loving and tender husband. Thus the story of Theseus' Wedding not only, as has been said, serves to hold the plot together, but also contributes its share to the illustration of the central idea.

When we turn to the Fairies, we find that what enters into human life only as a transitory disturbing element, is in them the normal law of their being. They are irresponsible creatures throughout, eternal children. They belong to the winds and the clouds and the flowers, to all in nature that is beautiful and gracious and fleeting; but of the characteristics by which man differs from these, the sense of law and the instinct of self-control, they show no trace. Puck, the fairy jester, is the tricky house sprite, whose sport it is to bring perplexity upon hapless mortals. Oberon and Titania will be jealous and be reconciled to each other a dozen times a day, while for culmination of their story you have the absurd spectacle of a fairy in love with an ass. So that in them is represented, as it were *in vacuo*, the very quality of which it is the object of the play to discern the partial and occasional workings in the heart of humanity.

In the story of the Handicraftsmen, the central idea does not find any direct illustration. The story is required, partly to introduce the interlude, but still more to provide that comic contrast which, as has been pointed out, was essential to the masque. It is ingeniously interwoven into the fairy-story by making Bottom the instrument of Oberon's revenge upon Titania. And it is in the person of Bottom that the whole humour of the thing consists. He is the first of Shakespeare's supreme comic creations, greater than the Costard of *Love's Labour's Lost* or the Launce of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, as the masterpiece is greater than the

imperfect sketch. From beginning to end of the play his absolute self-possession never for a moment fails him. He lords it over his fellow actors, as though he, and not Quince, were poet and stage-manager in one; he accepts the amorous attentions of a queen with calm serenity as no more than he might naturally have expected; nor does he ever, either before or after his transformation, betray the slightest suspicion of the fact that he is after all only an ass. It has often been thought that in the rehearsal scenes Shakespeare was drawing upon the humours of such rustic actors as might have ventured a Whitsun pastoral at Stratford upon Avon; yet one fears that the foibles of the green-room are much the same in the humblest and the loftiest walks of the profession, and who shall say that the poet is not poking good-humoured fun at some of his fellows of the Lord Chamberlain's company?

Finally, with the interlude, we come back to the central idea once more. For in the ill-starred loves of Pyramus and Thisbe, their assignation, their elopement, and their terrible end, we have but a burlesque presentment of the same theme that has occupied us throughout. It is all a matter of how the poet chooses to put it. Precisely the same situation that in *Romeo and Juliet* will ask our tears shall here move unextinguishable laughter. And so the serious interest of the play dissolves in mirth, and while the musicians break into the exquisite poetry of the epithalamium, the playwright stands and watches us with the smile of wise tolerance on his lips.

# A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM





## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.

EGEUS, father to Hermia.

LYSANDER, } in love with Hermia.

DEMETRIUS, }

PHILOSTRATE, Master of the Revels to Theseus.

QUINCE, a carpenter.

SNUG, a joiner.

BOTTOM, a weaver.

FLUTE, a bellows-mender.

SNOUT, a tinker.

STARVELING, a tailor.

HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.

HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.

HELENA, in love with Demetrius.

OSBERON, King of the fairies.

TITANIA, Queen of the fairies.

PUCK, or Robin Goodfellow.

PEASEBLOSSOM, }  
COBWEB, } fairies.  
MOTH, }  
MUSTARDSEED, }

Other fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus  
and Hippolyta.

PLACE: *Athens and a wood near it.*

TIME: *1st day—Act i.*

*2nd day—Act ii.—Act iv., Sc. i.*

*3rd day—Act iv. Sc. i. to end.*

# A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

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## ACT I.

SCENE I. *Athens. The palace of THESEUS.*

*Enter* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants.

*The.* Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour  
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in  
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow  
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,  
Like to a step-dame or a dowager  
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

*Hip.* Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;  
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;  
And then the moon, like to a silver bow  
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night  
Of our solemnities. 10

*The.* Go, Philostrate,  
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriment;  
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth:  
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;  
The pale companion is not for our pomp. [*Exit Philostrate.*]  
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,  
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;  
But I will wed thee in another key,  
With pomp, with triumph and with revelling.

*Enter* EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS.

*Ege.* Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke! 20

*The.* Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

*Ege.* Full of vexation come I, with complaint  
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.  
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,  
This man hath my consent to marry her.  
Stand forth, Lysander; and, my gracious duke,  
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child;

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes  
And interchanged love-tokens with my child :  
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung 30  
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,  
And stolen the impression of her fantasy  
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,  
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers  
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth :  
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,  
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,  
To stubborn harshness : and, my gracious duke,  
Be't so she will not here before your grace 40  
Consent to marry with Demetrius,  
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,  
As she is mine, I may dispose of her :  
Which shall be either to this gentleman  
Or to her death, according to our law  
Immediately provided in that case.

*The.* What say you, Hermia? be advised, fair maid :  
To you your father should be as a god ;  
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one  
To whom you are but as a form in wax  
By him imprinted and within his power 50  
To leave the figure or disfigure it.  
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

*Her.* So is Lysander.

*The.* In himself he is ;  
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,  
The other must he held the worthier.

*Her.* I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

*The.* Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

*Her.* I do entreat your grace to pardon me.  
I know not by what power I am made bold,  
Nor how it may concern my modesty, 60  
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts ;  
But I beseech your grace that I may know  
The worst that may befall me in this case,  
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

*The.* Either to die the death or to abjure  
For ever the society of men.  
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires ;  
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,  
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,  
You can endure the livery of a nun, 70  
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,

To live a barren sister all your life,  
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.  
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood,  
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;  
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,  
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn  
Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

*Her.* So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,  
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up  
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke  
My soul consents not to give sovereignty. 80

*The.* Take time to pause; and, by the next new moon—  
The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,  
For everlasting bond of fellowship—  
Upon that day either prepare to die  
For disobedience to your father's will,  
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;  
Or on Diana's altar to protest  
For aye austerity and single life. 90

*Dem.* Relent, sweet Hermia: and, Lysander, yield  
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

*Lys.* You have her father's love, Demetrius;  
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.

*Ege.* Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love,  
And what is mine my love shall render him.  
And she is mine, and all my right of her  
I do estate unto Demetrius.

*Lys.* I am, my lord, as well derived as he,  
As well possess'd; my love is more than his; 100  
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,  
If not with vantage, as Demetrius';  
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,  
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia:  
Why should not I then prosecute my right?  
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,  
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,  
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,  
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,  
Upon this spotted and inconstant man. 110

*The.* I must confess that I have heard so much,  
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;  
But, being over-full of self-affairs,  
My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come;  
And come, Egeus; you shall go with me,  
I have some private schooling for you both.

For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself  
 To fit your fancies to your father's will;  
 Or else the law of Athens yields you up—  
 Which by no means we may extenuate—  
 To death, or to a vow of single life. 120

Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love?

Demetrius and Egeus, go along:

I must employ you in some business

Against our nuptial and confer with you

Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

*Ege.* With duty and desire we follow you.

*[Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.]*

*Lys.* How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?  
 How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

*Her.* Belike for want of rain, which I could well  
 Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes. 130

*Lys.* Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,  
 Could ever hear by tale or history,  
 The course of true love never did run smooth;  
 But, either it was different in blood,—

*Her.* O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

*Lys.* Or else misgraffed in respect of years,—

*Her.* O spite! too old to be engaged to young.

*Lys.* Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,—

*Her.* O hell! to choose love by another's eyes. 140

*Lys.* Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,  
 War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,  
 Making it momentary as a sound,  
 Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;  
 Brief as the lightning in the collied night,  
 That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,  
 And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'  
 The jaws of darkness do devour it up:  
 So quick bright things come to confusion.

*Her.* If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,  
 It stands as an edict in destiny: 150

Then let us teach our trial patience,

Because it is a customary cross,

As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,  
 Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

*Lys.* A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.

I have a widow aunt, a dowager

Of great revenue, and she hath no child:

From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;

And she respects me as her only son. 160

There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;  
 And to that place the sharp Athenian law  
 Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me then,  
 Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;  
 And in the wood, a league without the town,  
 Where I did meet thee once with Helena,  
 To do observance to a morn of May,  
 There will I stay for thee.

*Her.* My good Lysander!  
 I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,  
 By his best arrow with the golden head, 170  
 By the simplicity of Venus' doves,  
 By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,  
 And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,  
 When the false Trojan under sail was seen,  
 By all the vows that ever men have broke,  
 In number more than ever woman spoke,  
 In that same place thou hast appointed me,  
 To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

*Lys.* Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

*Enter HELENA.*

*Her.* God speed fair Helena! whither away? 180  
*Hel.* Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.  
 Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!  
 Your eyes are lode-stars; and your tongue's sweet air  
 More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,  
 When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.  
 Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,  
 Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;  
 My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,  
 My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.  
 Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, 190  
 The rest I 'ld give to be to you translated.  
 O, teach me how you look, and with what art  
 You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

*Her.* I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

*Hel.* O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!

*Her.* I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

*Hel.* O that my prayers could such affection move!

*Her.* The more I hate, the more he follows me.

*Hel.* The more I love, the more he hateth me.

*Her.* His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine. 200

*Hel.* None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

*Her.* Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;

Lysander and myself will fly this place.  
Before the time I did Lysander see,  
Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:  
O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,  
That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!

*Lys.* Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:  
To-morrow night, when Phoebe doth behold  
Her silver visage in the watery glass,  
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,  
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,  
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

210

*Her.* And in the wood, where often you and I  
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,  
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;  
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,  
To seek new friends and stranger companies.  
Farewell, sweet playfellow; pray thou for us;  
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!  
Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight  
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

220

*Lys.* I will, my Hermia.

[*Exit Herm.*]

Helena, adieu:

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

[*Exit.*]

*Hel.* How happy some o'er other some can be!  
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;  
He will not know what all but he do know:  
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,  
So I, admiring of his qualities:

230

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity:  
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;  
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind;  
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;  
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:  
And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,  
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere:

240

For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,  
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;  
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,  
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.  
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:

Then to the wood will he to-morrow night  
Pursue her; and for this intelligence  
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:  
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,  
To have his sight thither and back again.

250  
[Exit.

SCENE II. *Athens.* QUINCE'S house.

*Enter* QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and  
STARVELING.

*Quin.* Is all our company here?

*Bot.* You were best to call them generally, man by man,  
according to the scrip.

*Quin.* Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is  
thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before  
the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

*Bot.* First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on,  
then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

*Quin.* Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy,  
and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby. 10

*Bot.* A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry.  
Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll.  
Masters, spread yourselves.

*Quin.* Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

*Bot.* Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

*Quin.* You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

*Bot.* What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

*Quin.* A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

*Bot.* That will ask some tears in the true performing of it:  
if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move  
storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest: yet  
my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely,  
or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split. 23

The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
Of prison gates;  
And Phibbus' car  
Shall shine from far  
And make and mar  
The foolish Fates.

30

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is  
Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.



*Quin.* Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

*Flu.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quin.* Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

*Flu.* What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

*Quin.* It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

*Flu.* Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming. 40

*Quin.* That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

*Bot.* An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice, 'Thisne, Thisne'; 'Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

*Quin.* No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby.

*Bot.* Well, proceed.

*Quin.* Robin Starveling, the tailor.

*Star.* Here, Peter Quince. 50

*Quin.* Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

*Snout.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quin.* You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father. Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

*Snug.* Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

*Quin.* You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring. 60

*Bot.* Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, "Let him roar again, let him roar again".

*Quin.* An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

*All.* That would hang us, every mother's son.

*Bot.* I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 't were any nightingale. 72

*Quin.* You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

*Bot.* Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

*Quin.* Why, what you will.

*Bot.* I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow. 82

*Quin.* Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced. But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not. 91

*Bot.* We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu.

*Quin.* At the duke's oak we meet.

*Bot.* Enough; hold or cut bow-strings. [Exeunt.]

## ACT II.

### SCENE I. *A wood near Athens.*

*Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy, and PUCK.*

*Puck.* How now, spirit! whither wander you?

*Fai.* Over hill, over dale,

Thorough bush, thorough brier,

Over park, over pale,

Thorough flood, thorough fire,

I do wander every where,

Swifter than the moon's sphere;

And I serve the fairy queen,

To dew her orbs upon the green.

The cowslips tall her pensioners be:

10

In their gold coats spots you see;

Those be rubies, fairy favours,

In those freckles live their savours:

I must go seek some dewdrops here

And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:

Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

*Puck.* The king doth keep his revels here to-night:  
Take heed the queen come not within his sight;

For Oberon is passing fell and wrath, 20  
 Because that she as her attendant hath  
 A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king;  
 She never had so sweet a changeling;  
 And jealous Oberon would have the child  
 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;  
 But she perforce withholds the loved boy,  
 Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy:  
 And now they never meet in grove or green,  
 By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,  
 But they do square, that all their elves for fear 30  
 Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

*Fai.* Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
 Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite  
 Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are not you he  
 That frights the maidens of the villagery;  
 Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern  
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;  
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;  
 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?  
 Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck, 40  
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck:  
 Are not you he?

*Puck.* Thou speak'st aright;  
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.  
 I jest to Oberon and make him smile  
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,  
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:  
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,  
 In very likeness of a roasted crab,  
 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob  
 And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale. 50  
 The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;  
 Then slip I from her, then down topples she,  
 And "tailor" cries, and falls into a cough;  
 And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,  
 And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear  
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.  
 But, room, fairy! here comes Oberon.

*Fai.* And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

*Enter, from one side, OBERON, with his train; from the other,*  
*TITANIA, with hers.*

*Obe.* Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania. 60

*Tita.* What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence:  
I have forsworn his bed and company.

*Obe.* Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?

*Tita.* Then I must be thy lady: but I know  
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,  
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,  
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love  
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,  
Come from the farthest steppe of India?  
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,  
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,  
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come  
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

70

*Obe.* How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,  
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,  
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?  
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night  
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?  
And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,  
With Ariadne and Antiopa?

80

*Tita.* These are the forgeries of jealousy:  
And never, since the middle summer's spring,  
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,  
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,  
Or in the beached margent of the sea,  
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,  
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.  
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,  
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
Contagious fogs; which falling in the land  
Hath every pelting river made so proud  
That they have overborne their continents:  
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,  
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn  
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;  
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,  
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;  
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,  
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green  
For lack of tread are undistinguishable:  
The human mortals want their winter here.  
No night is now with hymn or carol blest;  
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,  
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,  
That rheumatic diseases do abound:

90

100

And thorough this distemperature we see  
 The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts  
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,  
 And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown  
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds  
 Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,  
 The chiding autumn, angry winter, change  
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,  
 By their increase, now knows not which is which:  
 And this same progeny of evils comes  
 From our debate, from our dissension;  
 We are their parents and original.

110

*Obe.* Do you amend it then; it lies in you:  
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon?  
 I do but beg a little changeling boy,  
 To be my henchman.

120

*Tita.* Set your heart at rest:  
 The fairy land buys not the child of me.  
 His mother was a votaress of my order:  
 And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,  
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,  
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
 Marking the embarked traders on the flood,  
 When we have laughed to see the sails conceive  
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;  
 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait  
 Following,—her womb then rich with my young squire,—  
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land,  
 To fetch me trifles, and return again,  
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.  
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;  
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy,  
 And for her sake I will not part with him.

130

*Obe.* How long within this wood intend you stay?

*Tita.* Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.  
 If you will patiently dance in our round  
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us;  
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

140

*Obe.* Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

*Tita.* Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!  
 We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[*Exit Titania with her train.*]

*Obe.* Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove  
 Till I torment thee for this injury.  
 My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest

Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back  
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath  
That the rude sea grew civil at her song  
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,  
To hear the sea-maid's music. 150

*Puck.* I remember.

*Obe.* That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,  
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took  
At a fair vestal throned by the west,  
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts; 160  
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,  
And the imperial votaress passed on,  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.  
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:  
It fell upon a little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.  
Fetch me that flower; the herb I show'd thee once:  
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid 170  
Will make or man or woman madly dote  
Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again  
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

*Puck.* I'll put a girdle round about the earth  
In forty minutes.

[*Exit.*

*Obe.* Having once this juice,  
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,  
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.  
The next thing then she waking looks upon,  
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, 180  
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,  
She shall pursue it with the soul of love:  
And ere I take this charm from off her sight,  
As I can take it with another herb,  
I'll make her render up her page to me.  
But who comes here? I am invisible;  
And I will overhear their conference.

*Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him.*

*Dem.* I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.  
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?

The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me. 190

Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood;

And here am I, and wode within this wood,

Because I cannot meet my Hermia.

Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

*Hel.* You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;

But yet you draw not iron, for my heart

Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,

And I shall have no power to follow you.

*Dem.* Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?

Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth 200

Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?

*Hel.* And even for that do I love you the more.

I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,

The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:

Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,

Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,

Unworthy as I am, to follow you.

What worser place can I beg in your love,—

And yet a place of high respect with me,—

Than to be used as you use your dog? 210

*Dem.* Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,

For I am sick when I do look on thee.

*Hel.* And I am sick when I look not on you.

*Dem.* You do impeach your modesty too much,

To leave the city and commit yourself

Into the hands of one that loves you not;

To trust the opportunity of night

And the ill counsel of a desert place

With the rich worth of your virginity.

*Hel.* Your virtue is my privilege for that; 220

It is not night when I do see your face,

Therefore I think I am not in the night;

Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,

For you in my respect are all the world:

Then how can it be said I am alone,

When all the world is here to look on me

*Dem.* I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,

And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

*Hel.* The wildest hath not such a heart as you.

Run when you will, the story shall be changed: 230

Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;

The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind

Makes speed to catch the tiger; bootless speed,

When cowardice pursues and valour flies.

*Dem.* I will not stay thy questions ; let me go :  
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe  
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

*Hel.* Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,  
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius !  
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex : 240  
We cannot fight for love, as men may do ;  
We should be woo'd and were not made to woo. [*Exit Dem.*  
I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,  
To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*

*Obe.* Fare thee well, nymph : ere he do leave this grove,  
Thou shalt fly him and he shall seek thy love.

*Re-enter PUCK.*

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

*Puck.* Ay, there it is.

*Obe.* I pray thee, give it me.  
I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, 250  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine :  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight ;  
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,  
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in :  
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,  
And make her full of hateful fantasies.  
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove :  
A sweet Athenian lady is in love 260  
With a disdainful youth ; anoint his eyes :  
But do it when the next thing he espies  
May be the lady : thou shalt know the man  
By the Athenian garments he hath on.  
Effect it with some care that he may prove  
More fond on her than she upon her love :  
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

*Puck.* Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another part of the wood.*

*Enter TITANIA, with her train.*

*Tita.* Come, now a roundel and a fairy song ;  
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence ;



Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,  
 Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,  
 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back  
 The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders  
 At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;  
 Then to your offices and let me rest.

*The Fairies sing.*

You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen; 10  
 Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,  
 Come not near our fairy queen.  
 Philomel, with melody  
 Sing in our sweet lullaby;  
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:  
 Never harm,  
 Nor spell nor charm,  
 Come our lovely lady nigh;  
 So, good night, with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here; 20  
 Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!  
 Beetles black, approach not near;  
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.  
 Philomel, with melody, &c.

*A Fairy.* Hence, away! now all is well:  
 One aloof stand sentinel.

*[Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.]*

*Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.*

*Obe.* What thou seest when thou dost wake,  
 Do it for thy true love take,  
 Love and languish for his sake:  
 Be it ounce, or cat, or bear, 30  
 Pard, or boar with bristled hair,  
 In thy eye that shall appear  
 When thou wakest, it is thy dear:  
 Wake when some vile thing is near. *[Exit.]*

*Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA.*

*Lys.* Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;  
 And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:  
 We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
 And tarry for the comfort of the day.

*Her.* Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;  
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

40

*Lys.* One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;  
One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

*Her.* Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,  
Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

*Lys.* O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!  
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit  
So that but one heart we can make of it;  
Two bosoms interchained with an oath;  
So then two bosoms and a single troth.  
Then by your side no bed-room me deny;  
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

50

*Her.* Lysander riddles very prettily:  
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,  
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.  
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy  
Lie further off; in human modesty,  
Such separation as may well be said  
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,  
So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend:  
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

60

*Lys.* Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;  
And then end life when I end loyalty!  
Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

*Her.* With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd!  
[*They sleep.*]

*Enter PUCK.*

*Puck.* Through the forest have I gone,  
But Athenian found I none,  
On whose eyes I might approve  
This flower's force in stirring love.  
Night and silence.—Who is here?  
Weeds of Athens he doth wear;  
This is he, my master said,  
Despised the Athenian maid;  
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,  
On the dank and dirty ground.  
Pretty soul! she durst not lie  
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.  
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw  
All the power this charm doth owe.  
When thou wakest, let love forbid

70

80

Sleep his seat on thy eyelid;  
 So awake when I am gone;  
 For I must now to Oberon.

[Exit.

*Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running.*

*Hel.* Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

*Dem.* I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

*Hel.* O, wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

*Dem.* Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go. [Exit.

*Hel.* O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;

90

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.

How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear:

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?

But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!

100

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

*Lys.* [Awaking] And run through fire I will for thy sweet  
 sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,

That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word

Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

*Hel.* Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.

What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?

Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

110

*Lys.* Content with Hermia! No; I do repent

The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love:

Who will not change a raven for a dove?

The will of man is by his reason sway'd;

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Things growing are not ripe until their season:

So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;

And touching now the point of human skill,

Reason becomes the marshal to my will

120

And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook

Love's stories written in love's richest book.

*Hel.* Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?  
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?  
Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,  
That I did never, no, nor never can,  
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,  
But you must flout my insufficiency?  
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,  
In such disdainful manner me to woo. 130

But fare you well: perforce I must confess  
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.  
O, that a lady, of one man refused,  
Should of another therefore be abused! [*Exit.*]

*Lys.* She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there:  
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!  
For as a surfeit of the sweetest things  
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,  
Or as the heresies that men do leave  
Are hated most of those they did deceive, 140  
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,  
Of all be hated, but the most of me!  
And, all my powers, address your love and might  
To honour Helen and to be her knight! [*Exit.*]

*Hel.* [*Awaking*] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best  
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!  
Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!  
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:  
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,  
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey. 150  
Lysander! what, removed? Lysander! lord!  
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?  
Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;  
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.  
No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:  
Either death or you I'll find immediately. [*Exit.*]

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## ACT III.

SCENE I. *The wood. Titania lying asleep.*

*Enter* QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOOT, and  
STARVELING.

*Bot.* Are we all met?

*Quin.* Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

*Bot.* Peter Quince,—

*Quin.* What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

*Bot.* There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that? 11

*Snout.* By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

*Star.* I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

*Bot.* Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear. 20

*Quin.* Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.

*Bot.* No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

*Snout.* Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

*Star.* I fear it, I promise you.

*Bot.* Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to't. 30

*Snout.* Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

*Bot.* Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—‘Ladies,’—or ‘Fair ladies,—I would wish you,’—or ‘I would request you,’—or ‘I would entreat you,—not to fear, not to tremble: my

life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are;' and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. 41

*Quin.* Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

*Snout.* Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

*Bot.* A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

*Quin.* Yes, it doth shine that night.

*Bot.* Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement. 51

*Quin.* Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and says he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

*Snout.* You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

*Bot.* Some man or other must present Wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper. 62

*Quin.* If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake: and so every one according to his cue.

*Enter PUCK behind.*

*Puck.* What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,  
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?  
What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor;  
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause. 70

*Quin.* Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

*Bot.* Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet,—

*Quin.* Odorous, odorous.

*Bot.* —odours savours sweet:

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.

But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,

And by and by I will to thee appear.

*Puck.* A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.

*Flu.* Must I speak now?

[*Exit.*  
[*Exit.*

*Quin.* Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

*Flu.* Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue, 82

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

*Quin.* 'Ninus' tomb, man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once; cues and all. Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, 'never tire.' 90

*Flu.* O,—As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

*Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head.*

*Bot.* If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.

*Quin.* O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

*[Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.]*

*Puck.* I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,  
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:  
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;  
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,  
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. *[Exit.]*

*Bot.* Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard. 102

*Re-enter SNOOT.*

*Snout.* O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

*Bot.* What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? *[Exit Snout.]*

*Re-enter QUINCE.*

*Quin.* Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. *[Exit.]*

*Bot.* I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. *[Sings.]*

The ousel cock so black of hue, 112

With orange-tawny bill,

The throstle with his note so true,

The wren with little quill,—

*Tita.* [*Awaking*] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

*Bot.* [*Sings*]

The finch, the sparrow and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer nay;— 120

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so?

*Tita.* I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:  
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;  
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;  
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me  
On the first view to say, to swear I love thee.

*Bot.* Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days; the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion. 132

*Tita.* Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

*Bot.* Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

*Tita.* Out of this wood do not desire to go:  
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.  
I am a spirit of no common rate:  
The summer still doth tend upon my state;  
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me; 140  
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,  
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,  
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:  
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so  
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.  
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed!

*Enter* PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and  
MUSTARDSEED.

*Peas.* Ready.

*Cob.* And I.

*Moth.* And I.

*Mus.* And I.

*All.* Where shall we go?

*Tita.* Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;  
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;  
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries, 150



With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;  
 The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,  
 And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs.  
 And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes.  
 To have my love to bed and to arise;  
 And pluck the wings from painted butterflies  
 To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:  
 Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

*Peas.* Hail, mortal!

*Cob.* Hail!

*Moth.* Hail!

*Mus.* Hail!

*Bot.* I cry your worships mercy, heartily: I beseech your worship's name. 161

*Cob.* Cobweb.

*Bot.* I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. Your name, honest gentleman?

*Peas.* Peaseblossom.

*Bot.* I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir? 170

*Mus.* Mustardseed.

*Bot.* Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house: I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

*Tita.* Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;

And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,

Lamenting some enforced chastity. 180

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II. *Another part of the wood.*

*Enter OBERON.*

*Obe.* I wonder if Titania be awaked;  
 Then, what it was that next came in her eye,  
 Which she must dote on in extremity.

*Enter* PUCK.

Here comes my messenger.

How now, mad spirit!

What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

*Puck.* My mistress with a monster is in love.

Near to her close and consecrated bower,

While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,

A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,

That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,

10

Were met together to rehearse a play

Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.

The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,

Who Pyramus presented, in their sport

Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake:

When I did him at this advantage take,

An ass's nolle I fixed on his head:

Anon his Thisbe must be answered,

And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,

20

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,

Or russet-pated thoughts, many in sort,

Rising and cawing at the gun's report,

Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,

So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;

And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;

He murder cries and help from Athens calls.

Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,

Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;

For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;

Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch.

30

I led them on in this distracted fear,

And left sweet Pyramus translated there:

When in that moment, so it came to pass,

Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

*Obe.* This falls out better than I could devise.

But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes

With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

*Puck.* I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—

And the Athenian woman by his side;

That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

40

*Enter* HERMIA and DEMETRIUS.

*Obe.* Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

*Puck.* This is the woman, but not this the man.

*Dem.* O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?  
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

*Her.* Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,  
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.  
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,  
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,  
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day 50  
As he to me: would he have stolen away  
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon  
This whole earth may be bored and that the moon  
May through the centre creep and so displease  
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.  
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;  
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

*Dem.* So should the murder'd look, and so should I,  
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty:  
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 60  
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

*Her.* What's this to my Lysander? where is he?  
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

*Dem.* I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

*Her.* Out, dog! out, cur! thou drivest me past the bounds  
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?  
Henceforth be never number'd among men!  
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!  
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,  
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch! 70  
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?  
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue  
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

*Dem.* You spend your passion on a misprised mood:  
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;  
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

*Her.* I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

*Dem.* An if I could, what should I get therefore?

*Her.* A privilege never to see me more.

And from thy hated presence part I so: 80  
See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [*Exit.*]

*Dem.* There is no following her in this fierce vein:  
Here therefore for a while I will remain.  
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow  
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe;  
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,  
If for his tender here I make some stay. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Obe.* What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite  
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight :  
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue 90  
Some true love turn'd and not a false turn'd true.

*Puck.* Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,  
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

*Obe.* About the wood go swifter than the wind,  
And Helena of Athens look thou find :  
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,  
With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear :  
By some illusion see thou bring her here :  
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

*Puck.* I go, I go ; look how I go, 100  
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [*Exit.*

*Obe.* Flower of this purple dye,  
Hit with Cupid's archery,  
Sink in apple of his eye.  
When his love he doth espy,  
Let her shine as gloriously  
As the Venus of the sky.  
When thou wakest, if she be by,  
Beg of her for remedy.

*Re-enter PUCK.*

*Puck.* Captain of our fairy band, 110  
Helena is here at hand ;  
And the youth, mistook by me,  
Pleading for a lover's fee.  
Shall we their fond pageant see?  
Lord, what fools these mortals be !

*Obe.* Stand aside : the noise they make  
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

*Puck.* Then will two at once woo one ;  
That must needs be sport alone ;  
And those things do best please me 120  
That befall preposterously.

*Enter LYSANDER and HELENA.*

*Lys.* Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?  
Scorn and derision never come in tears :  
Look, when I vow, I weep ; and vows so born,  
In their nativity all truth appears.  
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,  
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?

*Hel.* You do advance your cunning more and more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!  
 These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er? 130

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:  
 Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,  
 Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

*Lys.* I had no judgement when to her I swore.

*Hel.* Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

*Lys.* Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

*Dem.* [*Awaking*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!  
 To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show  
 Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow! 140

That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,

Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow

When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss

This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

*Hel.* O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent  
 To set against me for your merriment:

If you were civil and knew courtesy,

You would not do me thus much injury.

Can you not hate me, as I know you do,

But you must join in souls to mock me too? 150

If you were men, as men you are in show,

You would not use a gentle lady so;

To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,

When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.

You both are rivals, and love Hermia;

And now both rivals, to mock Helena:

A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,

To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes

With your derision! none of noble sort

Would so offend a virgin and extort 160

A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

*Lys.* You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;

For you love Hermia; this you know I know:

And here, with all good will, with all my heart,

In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;

And yours of Helena to me bequeath,

Whom I do love and will do till my death.

*Hel.* Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

*Dem.* Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:

If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone. 170

My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,

And now to Helen is it home return'd,

There to remain.

*Lys.* Helen, it is not so.

*Dem.* Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,  
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.  
Look, where thy love comes ; yonder is thy dear.

*Re-enter HERMIA.*

*Her.* Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,  
The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;  
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,  
It pays the hearing double recompense. 180  
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found ;  
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.  
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

*Lys.* Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

*Her.* What love could press Lysander from my side?

*Lys.* Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,  
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night  
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.  
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,  
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so? 190

*Her.* You speak not as you think : it cannot be.

*Hel.* Lo, she is one of this confederacy!  
Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three  
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.  
Injurious Hermia ! most ungrateful maid !  
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived  
To bait me with this foul derision?  
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,  
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,  
When we have chid the hasty-footed time 200  
For parting us,—O, is all forgot?  
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?  
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,  
Have with our needles created both one flower,  
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,  
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,  
As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,  
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,  
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,  
But yet an union in partition ; 210  
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem ;  
So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart ;  
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,  
Due but to one and crowned with one crest.  
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,

To join with men in scorning your poor friend?  
 It is not friendly, 't is not maidenly:  
 Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,  
 Though I alone do feel the injury.

*Her.* I am amazed at your passionate words. 220  
 I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

*Hel.* Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,  
 To follow me and praise my eyes and face?  
 And made your other love, Demetrius,  
 Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,  
 To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,  
 Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this  
 To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander  
 Deny your love, so rich within his soul,  
 And tender me, forsooth, affection, 230  
 But by your setting on, by your consent?  
 What though I be not so in grace as you,  
 So hung upon with love, so fortunate,  
 But miserable most, to love unloved?  
 This you should pity rather than despise.

*Her.* I understand not what you mean by this.

*Hel.* Ay, do, perséver, counterfeit sad looks,  
 Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;  
 Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up:  
 This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled. 240  
 If you have any pity, grace, or manners,  
 You would not make me such an argument.  
 But fare ye well: 't is partly my own fault;  
 Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

*Lys.* Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:  
 My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

*Hel.* O excellent!

*Her.* Sweet, do not scorn her so.

*Dem.* If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

*Lys.* Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:  
 Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers. 250  
 Helen, I love thee; by my life, I do:  
 I swear by that which I will lose for thee,  
 To prove him false that says I love thee not.

*Dem.* I say I love thee more than he can do.

*Lys.* If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

*Dem.* Quick, come!

*Her.* Lysander, whereto tends all this?

*Lys.* Away, you Ethiope!

*Her.* No, no; he'll—

*Dem.* Seem to break loose! take on as you would follow,  
But yet come not! you are a tame man, go!

*Lys.* Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose, 260  
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

*Her.* Why are you grown so rude? what change is this?  
Sweet love,—

*Lys.* Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!  
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

*Her.* Do you not jest?

*Hel.* Yes, sooth; and so do you.

*Lys.* Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

*Dem.* I would I had your bond, for I perceive  
A weak bond holds you: I'll not trust your word.

*Lys.* What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?  
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so. 270

*Her.* What, can you do me greater harm than hate?  
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!

Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me:

Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—

In earnest, shall I say?

*Lys.* Ay, by my life;  
And never did desire to see thee more.

Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;  
Be certain, nothing truer; 't is no jest 280

That I do hate thee and love Helena.

*Her.* O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!  
You thief of love! what, have you come by night  
And stolen my love's heart from him?

*Hel.* Fine, i' faith!

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,  
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear  
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?

Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

*Her.* Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.  
Now I perceive that she hath made compare 290

Between our statures; she hath urged her height;  
And with her personage, her tall personage,  
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.

And are you grown so high in his esteem,

Because I am so dwarfish and so low?

How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;

How low am I? I am not yet so low

But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.



*Hel.* I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,  
 Let her not hurt me: I was never curst ; 300  
 I have no gift at all in shrewishness ;  
 I am a right maid for my cowardice :  
 Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,  
 Because she is something lower than myself,  
 That I can match her.

*Her.* Lower ! hark, again.

*Hel.* Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.  
 I evermore did love you, Hermia,  
 Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you ;  
 Save that, in love unto Demetrius,  
 I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310  
 He follow'd you ; for love I follow'd him ;  
 But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me  
 To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too :  
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,  
 To Athens will I bear my folly back  
 And follow you no further : let me go :  
 You see how simple and how fond I am.

*Her.* Why, get you gone : who is't that hinders you ?

*Hel.* A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

*Her.* What, with Lysander ?

*Hel.* With Demetrius. 320

*Lys.* Be not afraid ; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

*Dem.* No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

*Hel.* O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd !  
 She was a vixen when she went to school ;  
 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

*Her.* " Little " again ! nothing but " low " and " little " !  
 Why will you suffer her to flout me thus ?  
 Let me come to her.

*Lys.* Get you gone, you dwarf ;  
 You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made ;  
 You bead, you acorn.

*Dem.* You are too officious 330  
 On her behalf that scorns your services.  
 Let her alone : speak not of Helena ;  
 Take not her part ; for, if thou dost intend  
 Never so little show of love to her,  
 Thou shalt aby it.

*Lys.* Now she holds me not ;  
 Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,  
 Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

*Dem.* Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*]

*Her.* You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you:  
Nay, go not back.

*Hel.* I will not trust you, I, 340  
Nor longer stay in your curst company.

Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,  
My legs are longer though, to run away.

[*Exit.*]

*Her.* I am amazed, and know not what to say.

[*Exit.*]

*Obe.* This is thy negligence: still thou mistakest,  
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

*Puck.* Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.  
Did not you tell me I should know the man

By the Athenian garments he had on?

And so far blameless proves my enterprise, 350

That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes;

And so far am I glad it so did sort

As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

*Obe.* Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight:

Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;

The starry welkin cover thou anon

With drooping fog as black as Acheron,

And lead these testy rivals so astray

As one come not within another's way.

Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue, 360

Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;

And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;

And from each other look thou lead them thus,

Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep

With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep:

Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;

Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,

To take from thence all error with his might,

And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.

When they next wake, all this derision 370

Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,

And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,

With league whose date till death shall never end.

Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,

I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy:

And then I will her charmed eye release

From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

*Puck.* My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,

For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,

And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger; 380

At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,  
Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,  
That in crossways and floods have burial,  
Already to their wormy beds are gone;  
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,  
They wilfully themselves exile from light  
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

*Obe.* But we are spirits of another sort:  
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,  
And, like a forester, the groves may tread, 390  
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,  
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,  
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.  
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:  
We may effect this business yet ere day. [Exit.

*Puck.* Up and down, up and down,  
I will lead them up and down:  
I am fear'd in field and town:  
Goblin, lead them up and down.  
Here comes one. 400

*Re-enter* LYSANDER.

*Lys.* Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

*Puck.* Here, villain; drawn and ready. Where art thou?

*Lys.* I will be with thee straight.

*Puck.* Follow me, then,  
To plainer ground. [Exit *Lysander*, as following the voice.

*Re-enter* DEMETRIUS.

*Dem.* Lysander! speak again:  
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?  
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

*Puck.* Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,  
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,  
And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou child  
I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defiled 410  
That draws a sword on thee.

*Dem.* Yea, art thou there?

*Puck.* Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here. [Exeunt.

*Re-enter* LYSANDER.

*Lys.* He goes before me and still dares me on;  
When I come where he calls, then he is gone,  
The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:

I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;  
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,  
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou gentle day!  
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,  
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.*]

*Re-enter* PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

*Puck.* Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not? 421

*Dem.* Abide me, if thou darest; for well I wot  
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,  
And darest not stand, nor look me in the face.  
Where art thou now?

*Puck.* Come hither: I am here.

*Dem.* Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear,  
If ever I thy face by daylight see:  
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me  
To measure out my length on this cold bed.  
By day's approach look to be visited. 430

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Re-enter* HELENA.

*Hel.* O weary night, O long and tedious night,  
Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east,  
That I may back to Athens by daylight,  
From these that my poor company detest:  
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,  
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Puck.* Yet but three? Come one more;  
Two of both kinds makes up four.  
Here she comes, curst and sad:  
Cupid is a knavish lad,  
Thus to make poor females mad. 440

*Re-enter* HERMIA.

*Her.* Never so weary, never so in woe,  
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,  
I can no further crawl, no further go:  
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.  
Here will I rest me till the break of day.  
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!  
[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Puck.* On the ground  
Sleep sound:

I'll apply 450  
 To your eye,  
 Gentle lover, remedy.  
 [*Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.*  
 When thou wakest,  
 Thou takest  
 True delight  
 In the sight  
 Of thy former lady's eye :  
 And the country proverb known,  
 That every man should take his own,  
 In your waking shall be shown : 460  
 Jack shall have Jill ;  
 Nought shall go ill ;  
 The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.  
[Exit.

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## ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The same.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,  
 and HERMIA *lying asleep.*

*Enter* TITANIA and BOTTOM ; PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB,  
 MOTH, MUSTARDSEED, and other Fairies attending ;  
 OBERON *behind unseen.*

*Tita.* Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
 While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,  
 And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
 And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

*Bot.* Where's Peaseblossom?

*Peas.* Ready.

*Bot.* Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's Mounsieur  
 Cobweb?

*Cob.* Ready. 9

*Bot.* Monsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get you your  
 weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee  
 on the top of a thistle; and, good mounsieur, bring me the  
 honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action,  
 mounsieur; and, good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag  
 break not; I would be loth to have you overflown with a  
 honey-bag, signior. Where's Mounsieur Mustardseed?

*Mus.* Ready.

*Bot.* Give me your neaf, Mounsieur Mustardseed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good mounsieur.

*Mus.* What's your will? 20

*Bot.* Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

*Tita.* What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

*Bot.* I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones.

*Tita.* Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

*Bot.* Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow. 31

*Tita.* I have a venturous fairy that shall seek The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

*Bot.* I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

*Tita.* Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away. [*Exeunt fairies.*]  
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist; the female ivy so 40  
Enrings the barked fingers of the elm.  
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee! [*They sleep.*]

*Enter PUCK.*

*Obe.* [*Advancing*] Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity:  
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,  
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,  
I did upbraid her and fall out with her;  
For she his hairy temples then had rounded  
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;  
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds 50  
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,  
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes  
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.  
When I had at my pleasure taunted her  
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,  
I then did ask of her her changeling child;  
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent  
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.  
And now I have the boy, I will undo

This hateful imperfection of her eyes: 60

And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp

From off the head of this Athenian swain;

That, he awaking when the other do,

May all to Athens back again repair

And think no more of this night's accidents

But as the fierce vexation of a dream.

But first I will release the fairy queen.

Be as thou wast wont to be;

See as thou wast wont to see:

Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower

Hath such force and blessed power. 70

Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.

*Tita.* My Oberon! what visions have I seen!

Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

*Obe.* There lies your love.

*Tita.* How came these things to pass?

O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

*Obe.* Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head.

Titania, music call; and strike more dead

Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

*Tita.* Music, ho! music, such as charmeth sleep! 80

[*Music, still.*

*Puck.* Now, when thou wakest, with thine own fool's eyes  
peep.

*Obe.* Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with  
me,

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity

And will to-morrow midnight solemnly

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly

And bless it to all fair prosperity:

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be

Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

*Puck.* Fairy king, attend, and mark: 90

I do hear the morning lark.

*Obe.* Then, my queen, in silence sad,

Trip we after night's shade:

We the globe can compass soon,

Swifter than the wandering moon.

*Tita.* Come, my lord, and in our flight

Tell me how it came this night

That I sleeping here was found

With these mortals on the ground. [*Exeunt.*

[*Horns winded within.*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train.*

*The.* Go, one of you, find out the forester; 100  
For now our observation is perform'd;  
And since we have the vaward of the day,  
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.  
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go:  
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester. [*Exit an Attendant.*  
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,  
And mark the musical confusion  
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

*Hip.* I was with Hercules and Cadmus once, 110  
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear  
With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear  
Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,  
The skies, the fountains, every region near  
Seem'd all one mutual cry: I never heard  
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

*The.* My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;  
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls; 120  
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,  
Each under each. A cry more tuneable  
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:  
Judge when you hear. But, soft! what nymphs are these?

*Ege.* My lord, this is my daughter here asleep;  
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;  
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:  
I wonder of their being here together.

*The.* No doubt they rose up early to observe 130  
The rite of May, and, hearing our intent,  
Came here in grace of our solemnity.  
But speak, Egeus; is not this the day  
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

*Ege.* It is, my lord.

*The.* Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[*Horns and shout within. Lys., Dem., Hel., and Her.,  
wake and start up.*

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past:  
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

*Lys.* Pardon, my lord.

*The.* I pray you all, stand up.  
I know you two are rival enemies:



How comes this gentle concord in the world, 140  
That hatred is so far from jealousy,  
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

*Lys.* My lord, I shall reply amazedly,  
Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,  
I cannot truly say how I came here;  
But, as I think,—for truly would I speak,  
And now I do bethink me, so it is,—  
I came with Hermia hither: our intent  
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might  
Without the peril of the Athenian law. 150

*Ege.* Enough, enough, my lord: you have enough:  
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.  
They would have stolen away; they would, Demetrius,  
Thereby to have defeated you and me,  
You of your wife and me of my consent,  
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

*Dem.* My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,  
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;  
And I in fury hither follow'd them,  
Fair Helena in fancy following me. 160  
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,—  
But by some power it is,—my love to Hermia,  
Melted as the snow, seems to me now  
As the remembrance of an idle gawd  
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;  
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,  
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,  
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,  
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:  
But, like a sickness, did I loathe this food; 170  
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,  
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,  
And will for evermore be true to it.

*The.* Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:  
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.  
Egeus, I will overbear your will;  
For in the temple, by and by, with us  
These couples shall eternally be knit:  
And, for the morning now is something worn,  
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside. 180  
Away with us to Athens; three and three,  
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.

Come, Hippolyta.

[*Exeunt The., Hip., Ege.,  
and train.*

*Dem.* These things seem small and undistinguishable,  
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

*Her.* Methinks I see these things with parted eye,  
When every thing seems double.

*Hel.* So methinks:  
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,  
Mine own, and not mine own.

*Dem.* Are you sure  
That we are awake? It seems to me  
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think  
The duke was here, and bid us follow him? 190

*Her.* Yea; and my father.

*Hel.* And Hippolyta.

*Lys.* And he did bid us follow to the temple.

*Dem.* Why, then, we are awake: let's follow him:  
And by the way let us recount our dreams. [*Exeunt.*]

*Bot.* [*Awaking*] When my cue comes, call me, and I will  
answer: my next is, "Most fair Pyramus". Heigh-ho! Peter  
Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker!  
Starveling! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep!  
I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past  
the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass,  
if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—  
there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and me-  
thought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will  
offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath  
not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not  
able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report,  
what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a  
ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, be-  
cause it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end  
of a play, before the duke: peradventure, to make it the more  
gracious, I shall sing it at her death. 213 [*Exit.*]

## SCENE II. Athens. QUINCE'S house.

*Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING.*

*Quin.* Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home  
yet?

*Star.* He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is trans-  
ported.

*Flu.* If he come not, then the play is marred: it goes not  
forward, doth it?

*Quin.* It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

*Flu.* No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens. 10

*Quin.* Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

*Flu.* You must say 'paragon': a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

*Enter* SNUG.

*Snug.* Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

*Flu.* O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing. 22

*Enter* BOTTOM.

*Bot.* Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

*Quin.* Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

*Bot.* Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

*Quin.* Let us hear, sweet Bottom. 29

*Bot.* Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go, away! 39 [*Exeunt.*]

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## ACT V.

SCENE I. *Athens. The palace of THESEUS.*

*Enter* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords, *and*  
Attendants.

*Hip.* 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

*The.* More strange than true: I never may believe  
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.  
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact:  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,  
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic, 10  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy; 20  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

*Hip.* But all the story of the night told over,  
And all their minds transfigured so together,  
More witnesseth than fancy's images  
And grows to something of great constancy;  
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

*The.* Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

*Enter* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, *and* HELENA.

Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love  
Accompany your hearts!

*Lys.* More than to us 30  
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

*The.* Come now; what masques, what dances shall we  
have,  
To wear away this long age of three hours  
Between our after-supper and bed-time?

Where is our usual manager of mirth?  
 What revels are in hand? Is there no play,  
 To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?  
 Call Philostrate.

*Phil.* Here, mighty Theseus.

*The.* Say, what abridgement have you for this evening?  
 What masque? what music? How shall we beguile 40  
 The lazy time, if not with some delight?

*Phil.* There is a brief how many sports are ripe:  
 Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[*Giving a paper.*]

*The.* [*Reads*] "The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung  
 By an Athenian eunuch to the harp".

We'll none of that: that have I told my love,  
 In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

[*Reads*] "The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,  
 Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage".  
 That is an old device; and it was play'd 50  
 When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

[*Reads*] "The thrice three Muses mourning for the death  
 Of Learning, late deceased in beggary".

That is some satire, keen and critical,  
 Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

[*Reads*] "A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus  
 And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth".

Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!  
 That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.  
 How shall we find the concord of this discord? 60

*Phil.* A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,  
 Which is as brief as I have known a play;  
 But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,  
 Which makes it tedious; for in all the play  
 There is not one word apt, one player fitted:  
 And tragical, my noble lord, it is;  
 For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.  
 Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,  
 Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears  
 The passion of loud laughter never shed. 70

*The.* What are they that do play it?

*Phil.* Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,  
 Which never labour'd in their minds till now,  
 And now have toil'd their unbreathed memories  
 With this same play, against your nuptial.

*The.* And we will hear it.

*Phil.* No, my noble lord;

It is not for you: I have heard it over,  
 And it is nothing, nothing in the world;  
 Unless you can find sport in their intents,  
 Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain, 80.  
 To do you service.

*The.* I will hear that play;  
 For never anything can be amiss,  
 When simpleness and duty tender it.  
 Go, bring them in: and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit Philostrate.*]

*Hip.* I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged  
 And duty in his service perishing.

*The.* Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

*Hip.* He says they can do nothing in this kind.

*The.* The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.  
 Our sport shall be to take what they mistake: 90  
 And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect  
 Takes it in might, not merit.

Where I have come, great clerks have purposed  
 To greet me with premeditated welcomes;  
 Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,  
 Make periods in the midst of sentences,  
 Throttle their practised accent in their fears  
 And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,  
 Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,  
 Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome; 100  
 And in the modesty of fearful duty  
 I read as much as from the rattling tongue  
 Of saucy and audacious eloquence.  
 Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity  
 In least speak most, to my capacity.

*Re-enter PHILOSTRATE.*

*Phil.* So please your grace, the Prologue is address'd.

*The.* Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*]

*Enter QUINCE for the Prologue.*

*Pro.* If we offend, it is with our good will.  
 That you should think, we come not to offend,  
 But with good will. To show our simple skill, 110  
 That is the true beginning of our end.  
 Consider then we come but in despite.

We do not come as minding to content you,  
 Our true intent is. All for your delight  
 We are not here. That you should here repent you,

The actors are at hand; and by their show  
You shall know all that you are like to know.

*The.* This fellow doth not stand upon points.

*Lys.* He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows  
not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to  
speak, but to speak true. 121

*Hip.* Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on  
a recorder; a sound, but not in government.

*The.* His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing im-  
paired, but all disordered. Who is next?

*Enter PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE,  
and LION.*

*Pro.* Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;  
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know;

This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.

This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present 30

Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,

Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.

This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,

The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,

Did scare away, or rather did affright;

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall, 140

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,

And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain:

Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,

He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;

And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,

His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,

Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain

At large discourse, while here they do remain. 150

*[Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe, Lion, and Moonshine.]*

*The.* I wonder if the lion be to speak.

*Dem.* No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many  
asses do.

*Wall.* In this same interlude it doth befall  
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;  
And such a wall, as I would have you think,

That had in it a crannied hole or chink,  
 Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,  
 Did whisper often very secretly.  
 This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show 160  
 That I am that same wall; the truth is so:  
 And this the cranny is, right and sinister,  
 Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.  
*The.* Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?  
*Dem.* It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse,  
 my lord.

*Re-enter PYRAMUS.*

*The.* Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!  
*Pyr.* O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!  
 O night, which ever art when day is not'  
 O night, O night! alack, alack, alack, 170  
 I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!  
 And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,  
 That stand'st between her father's ground and mine!  
 Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,  
 Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne!  
 [Wall holds up his fingers.  
 Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!  
 But what see I? No Thisby do I see.  
 O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!  
 Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!  
*The.* The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse  
 again. 181  
*Pyr.* No, in truth, sir, he should not. "Deceiving me" is  
 Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her  
 through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you.  
 Yonder she comes.

*Re-enter THISBE.*

*This.* O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,  
 For parting my fair Pyramus and me!  
 My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,  
 Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.  
*Pyr.* I see a voice: now will I to the chink, 190  
 To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.  
 Thisby!  
*This.* My love thou art, my love I think.  
*Pyr.* Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;  
 And, like Limander, am I trusty still.  
*This.* And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.



*Pyr.* Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

*This.* As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

*Pyr.* O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!

*This.* I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all. 200

*Pyr.* Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

*This.* 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.

[*Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.*]

*Wall.* Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;

And, being done, thus Wall away doth go. [*Exit.*]

*The.* Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.

*Dem.* No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.

*Hip.* This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

*The.* The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them. 210

*Hip.* It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

*The.* If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

*Re-enter LION and MOONSHINE.*

*Lion.* You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear

The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,

May now perchance both quake and tremble here,

When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.

Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am

A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam; 220

For, if I should as lion come in strife

Into this place, 't were pity on my life.

*The.* A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

*Dem.* The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

*Lys.* This lion is a very fox for his valour.

*The.* True; and a goose for his discretion.

*Dem.* Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his discretion; and the fox carries the goose.

*The.* His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well: leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon. 231

*Moon.* This lanthorn doth the horned moon present;—

*Dem.* He should have worn the horns on his head.

*The.* He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

*Moon.* This lanthorn doth the horned moon present: Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.

*The.* This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man

should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man i'  
the moon? 240

*Dem.* He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see,  
it is already in snuff.

*Hip.* I am aweary of this moon: would he would change!

*The.* It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is  
in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay  
the time.

*Lys.* Proceed, Moon.

*Moon.* All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the  
lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thorn-  
bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog. 250

*Dem.* Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for all  
these are in the moon. But, silence! here comes Thisbe.

*Re-enter THISBE.*

*This.* This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?

*Lion.* [*Roaring*] Oh — [Thisbe runs off.]

*Dem.* Well roared, Lion.

*The.* Well run, Thisbe.

*Hip.* Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a  
good grace. [*The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.*]

*The.* Well moused, Lion.

*Lys.* And so the lion vanished. 260

*Dem.* And then came Pyramus.

*Re-enter PYRAMUS.*

*Pyr.* Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;

I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;

For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,

I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see?

How can it be?

270

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good,

What, stain'd with blood!

Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum;

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

*The.* This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go  
near to make a man look sad.

*Hip.* Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man. 280

*Pyr.* O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?

Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear:

Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame

That lived, that loved, that liked, that look'd with cheer.

Come, tears, confound;

Out, sword, and wound

The pap of Pyramus;

Ay, that left pap,

Where heart doth hop: [Stabs himself.

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. 290

Now am I dead,

Now am I fled;

My soul is in the sky:

Tongue, lose thy light;

Moon, take thy flight: [Exit Moonshine.

Now die, die, die, die, die. [Dies.

*Dem.* No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.

*Lys.* Less than an ace, man; for he is dead: he is nothing.

*The.* With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass. 300

*Hip.* How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

*The.* She will find him by starlight. Here she comes; and her passion ends the play.

*Re-enter THISBE.*

*Hip.* Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

*Dem.* A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

*Lys.* She has spied him already with those sweet eyes. 310

*Dem.* And thus she means, videlicet:—

*This.* Asleep, my love?

What, dead, my dove?

O Pyramus, arise!

Speak, speak. Quite dumb?

Dead, dead? A tomb

Must cover thy sweet eyes.

These lily lips

This cherry nose,

These yellow cowslip cheeks,

Are gone, are gone:

Lovers, make moan:

320

His eyes were green as leeks.

O Sisters three,

Come, come to me,

With hands as pale as milk;

Lay them in gore,

Since you have shore

With shears his thread of silk.

Tongue, not a word :

330

Come, trusty sword ;

Come, blade, my breast imbrue : [*Stabs herself.*

And, farewell, friends ;

Thus Thisby ends :

Adieu, adieu, adieu.

[*Dies.*

*The.* Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

*Dem.* Ay, and Wall too.

*Bot.* [*Starting up*] No, I assure you ; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company ?

341

*The.* No epilogue, I pray you ; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse ; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy : and so it is, truly ; and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask : let your epilogue alone.

[*A dance.*

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve :

Lovers, to bed ; 't is almost fairy time.

350

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn

As much as we this night have overwatch'd.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity.

In nightly revels and new jollity.

[*Exeunt.*

*Enter* PUCK.

*Puck.* Now the hungry lion roars,

And the wolf behowls the moon ;

Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,

All with weary task fordone.

360

Now the wasted brands do glow,

Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,

Puts the wretch that lies in woe

In remembrance of a shroud.

Now it is the time of night  
That the graves all gaping wide,  
Every one lets forth his sprite,  
In the church-way paths to glide:  
And we fairies, that do run  
By the triple Hecate's team, 370  
From the presence of the sun,  
Following darkness like a dream,  
Now are frolic: not a mouse  
Shall disturb this hallow'd house:  
I am sent with broom before,  
To sweep the dust behind the door.

*Enter OBERON and TITANIA with their train.*

- Obe.* Through the house give glimmering light,  
By the dread and drowsy fire:  
Every elf and fairy sprite  
Hop as light as bird from brier; 380  
And this ditty, after me,  
Sing, and dance it trippingly.
- Tita.* First, rehearse your song by rote,  
To each word a warbling note:  
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,  
Will we sing, and bless this place. [*Song and dance.*]
- Obe.* Now, until the break of day,  
Through this house each fairy stray.  
To the best bride-bed will we,  
Which by us shall blessed be; 390  
And the issue there create  
Ever shall be fortunate.  
So shall all the couples three  
Ever true in loving be;  
And the blots of Nature's hand  
Shall not in their issue stand;  
Never mole, hare lip, nor scar,  
Nor mark prodigious, such as are  
Despised in nativity,  
Shall upon their children be. 400  
With this field-dew consecrate,  
Every fairy take his gait;  
And each several chamber bless,  
Through this palace, with sweet peace;  
And the owner of it blest  
Ever shall in safety rest.

Trip away; make no stay;  
Meet me all by break of day.

[*Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.*]

*Puck.* If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this, and all is mended, 410  
That you have but slumber'd here  
While these visions did appear.  
And this weak and idle theme,  
No more yielding but a dream,  
Gentles, do not reprehend:  
If you pardon, we will mend:  
And, as I am an honest Puck,  
If we have unearned luck  
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,  
We will make amends ere long; 420  
Else the Puck a liar call:  
So, good night unto you all.  
Give me your hands, if we be friends,  
And Robin shall restore amends. [*Exit.*]

## NOTES.

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*These notes should be used with the Glossary, to which the student is referred for all matters of merely verbal interpretation.*

*Reference is made for other plays to the lines of the Globe text.*

*The symbols Q1 Q2 denote the Fisher quarto (1600) and the Roberts quarto (1600) respectively; F1, F2, F3, F4 the collected folio editions of 1623, 1632, 1664, 1685. Qq. denotes the consent of the two quartos, Ff. that of the folios.*

*The sections of Abbott's Shakespearian Grammar quoted are those of the 3rd edition.*

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.** The early editions have no list of characters. The first editor to supply one was Rowe. With regard to the source of the names, **Theseus** and **Hippolyta** Shakespeare found in the *Life of Theseus* in North's Plutarch. **Egeus** also occurs there, as the name of Theseus' father. The same collection contains lives of **Lysander** and of **Demetrius**. **Ligurge** and **Emetres** are allies respectively of **Palamon** and **Arcite** in the *Knights Tale*. **Philostrate** is the name assumed by **Arcite** in Chaucer's poem. He becomes the Squire of Theseus' Chamber. **Bottom** is clearly derived from the 'bottom' or reel of thread that weavers use. For the origin of **Oberon**, **Titania**, **Puck**, **Robin-Goodfellow**, see Appendix A, §§ 6, 14-16, 19. In the stage-directions of the Qq. Ff. *Puck* and *Robin-Goodfellow* or *Robin* are used indifferently, both often occurring in the same scene. There is no need to assume with Mr. Fleay that this points to a revision of the play. In the same way we find in the stage-directions *Queen* for *Titania*, *Clown* for *Bottom*, *Duke* and *Duchess* for *Theseus* and *Hippolyta*. In the text, *Robin* is always used except in v. 1. 417, 421, where he calls himself "an honest Puck", and "the Puck", and in ii. 1. 40, where the fairy speaks of "sweet Puck" as one of his names.

**TIME.** There is some confusion as to this. In i. 1. 2 it is said that four days and nights will precede the wedding. The plot should therefore cover five days in all; actually it covers three. The lovers (i. 1. 164) and the actors (i. 2. 86) both arrange to meet in the wood "to-morrow night". Act ii., therefore, is on the day after the opening scene, and the action extends through the night of that day until morning breaks in iv. 1. 91, and we find (iv. 1. 132) that it is already the wedding-day. This is the third day. Act iv. sc. 2 is in the same afternoon (iv. 2. 16), and Act v. in the evening after supper (v. 1. 34).

Another difficulty is presented by the moon. The wedding-day is the first of May (iv. 1. 130): it is also the day of a new moon (i. 1. 3, 10). Now, a new moon sets almost with the sun; and yet there is moon enough for the rehearsal (i. 2. 103), and it will even shine in at the casement of the great chamber window for the performance (iii. 1. 48).

The play is called a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, but the action does not take place at midsummer, nor, so far as we can discover, was the play produced at midsummer. For the significance of the title, see Introduction, p. 23.

There is no division into *Acts* and *Scenes* in the Qq.; F 1 gives the *Acts*, but not the *Scenes*.

### Act I.—Scene I.

The first Act is of the nature of a Prologue. Its function is twofold: (a) to inform us of the situation of the characters before the action begins; and (b) to start the threads of that action which are to be entangled and unravelled in the working out of the plot. Shakespeare is a practical playwright. He knows that we shall not be interested in his story until we have discovered what it is all about. Therefore he goes to work in a business-like way to tell us this at once.

From lines 1–19 of the opening scene we learn that Theseus has brought his bride to Athens, and that they are to be wedded in four days' time. This Theseus story, though perfectly simple in itself, is what has been called the 'enveloping action' of the play. All the other stories depend upon and are held together by this. It is at the wedding that Hermia's fate must be decided; it is for the wedding that Bottom and his fellows are preparing their interlude; it is to honour the wedding that Oberon and Titania have travelled, unknown to each other, from the far East.

The next part of the scene (lines 20–127) puts before us the story of the lovers. Hermia loves Lysander, who loves her; but Hermia's father Egeus would wed her to Demetrius, who has already played false to her friend, Helena (lines 106–110). Theseus warns Hermia that she must make up her mind to obey her father, and must give her answer on the day of his nuptials.

Finally, in lines 128–251, the real action of this story begins with the bold determination of the lovers to fly from Athens, and the resolve of Helena to win Demetrius to follow them.

1–19. Note that, although the turbulence of Theseus' youth is now over, the central idea of the play, the lawlessness of love, has had its illustration in his life also. He has woo'd Hippolyta with his sword, and won her love, doing her injuries. Now his period of *sturm und drang* is past, and he has come out of it, the serene and strong king.



2. four happy days bring in Another moon. Cf. the note on the *Time* of the Play.

4. wanes. So Q 2 Ff.; Q 1 has *waues*, the common printer's error of *u* for *n*.

lingers, in the causative sense of 'makes to linger', 'checks'. Cf. *Richard II.*, ii. 2. 70-72—

“A parasite, a keeper back of death,  
Who gently would dissolve the bands of life,  
Which false hope lingers in extremity”.

Abbott, § 291, gives a list of several verbs thus used by Shakespeare in a rarer transitive as well as a commoner intransitive sense.

5. Theseus, waiting for his promised bride, feels like a young man held back from the full enjoyment of his revenue by the necessity of paying part of it to his father's widow until her death. See Glossary, s.v. *Dowager*. Malone quotes Horace, *Epist.* i. 1. 20-22—

“ut piger annus  
Pupillis, quos dura premit custodia matrum,  
Sic mihi tarda fluunt ingrataque tempora”;

thus translated by Drant (1567)—

“Slow seems the year unto the ward,  
Which holden down must be,  
In custody of stepdame strait,—  
Slow slides the time to me”.

Cf. also *Merry Wives*, i. 1. 284, “I keep but three men and a boy yet, till my mother be dead”.

6. revenue. Here accented 'révenue'; in line 158, 'révénue'. See Essay on Metre, § 10 (i).

8. Four nights. So Q 1 Ff.; Q 2 *Four daies*.

10. New-bent. This is Rowe's very tempting emendation for the *Now bent* of the Qq. Ff.

15. companion, a word often used by Shakespeare in a depreciatory sense.

16. I woo'd thee with my sword. Cf. Chaucer, *Knights Tale*, 1-12—

“Whylom, as olde stories tellen us,  
Ther was a duk that highte Theseus;  
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,  
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,  
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.  
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne;  
What with his wisdom and his chivalrye  
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,

That whylom was y-cleped Scithia;  
 And weddede the quene Ipolita,  
 And broghte hir hoom with him in his contree,  
 With muchel glorie and greet solempnitee”.

There are, perhaps, further echoes of this passage in the ‘solemnities’ of line 11 and the ‘duke’ Theseus of line 20.

20–127. This part of the scene closely resembles in structure the opening of *The Comedy of Errors*, where Ægeon is brought before the Duke, and is respited until the end of the play. *The Comedy of Errors* is slightly earlier in date than *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. On the scansion of *Theseus*, *Egeus*, *Demetrius*, *Hermia*, see Essay on Metre, § 9.

20. The conception of Theseus as a ‘duke’ is a characteristic anachronism. Shakespeare, as we have just seen, found it in Chaucer.

24, 26. Stand forth, Demetrius... Stand forth, Lysander. Printed as stage-directions in all the Qq. Ff.; but the scansion shows that they are really part of the text.

27. F 2 tried to mend the metre by reading *This hath bewitched*, and Theobald by *This man hath witched*. It is better, however, to keep the text and to treat *man hath* as metrically equivalent to a single syllable, thus—

“This man ’th | bewitched | the bos | om of | my child”.

Such auxiliary forms as *hath*, *have*, *has*, *hast* are frequently merged in this way with a preceding pronoun. Cf. *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 47—

“This youth, | howe’er | distress’d, | appears | he hath had  
 Good ancestors”.

See König, p. 56, and Essay on Metre, § 8 (v).

31. *feigning...feigning*. This is Rowe’s spelling, but the Qq. Ff. have *faining...faining*, which Furness would retain in the sense of ‘yearning’. But I think *feigning* better suits the *stolen*, *cunning*, and *filched*, which follow in Egeus’ indictment. The antithesis is characteristic of Shakespeare’s early style. Cf. Introduction, p. 11. For the idea, cf. *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act iv. sc. 2, where Thurio and Proteus serenade Silvia at her chamber-window.

32. ‘Imprinted thyself by stealth upon her fancy.’ *Fantasy* often has the special sense of ‘love-fancy’. See Glossary.

39. *Be’t so*, a conditional clause = ‘if it be so’. Cf. Abbott, § 133.

45. Immediately, expressly, precisely: see Glossary.

54. in this kind, *i.e.* not as a man, but as a husband.

## 69. Scan—

'Whether, if | you yield | not to | your fa | ther's choice'.

*Whether* is metrically equivalent to a single syllable. See König, p. 32, and Essay on Metre, § 8 (ix) *b*.

70. **the livery of a nun.** A nun in the Athens of Theseus is something of an anachronism. But classical antiquity had its women vowed to a single life in the service of some goddess. At Rome there were the Vestal Virgins: at Athens Hermia is to protest on Diana's altar (line 89), Diana, or Artemis, being the goddess of chaste maidenhood. Cf. also North's Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*, "Egeus desiring (as they say) to know how he might have children, went into the city of Delphes, to the Oracle of Apollo: where, by a nunne of the temple, this notable prophesie was given him for an answer". It is worth remark, that although Titania is identified with Diana (cf. Appendix A, § 15), she speaks of 'a votaress of her order' as having a son (ii. 1. 123). Diana, in one of her aspects, was the moon-goddess, which explains the 'cold fruitless moon' of line 73.

76. **earthlier happy, happier on earth.** The phrase is really the comparative of the compound adjective 'earthly-happy'.

The idea that the rose which is distilled into scent is more fortunate than that which dies upon the tree may be variously illustrated. Thus, from the *Colloquium Proci et Puellae* of Erasmus: "Ego rosam existimo feliciorem, quae marcescit in hominis manu, delectans interim et oculos et nares, quam quae senescit in frutice". And from Lyly, *Midas*, Act ii. sc. 1: "You bee all young, and faire, endeavour all to bee wise and vertuous; that when, like roses, you shall fall from the stalke, you may be gathered, and put to the still". And from Shakespeare's own Sonnet 54, of canker-blooms, which

"Die to themselves; sweet roses do not so;  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made".

Cf. also Sonnet 5. The comparison of Beauty to a rose, which should be plucked before it fades, has of course been a commonplace of the poets, from Ausonius to Herrick.

80. **virgin patent**, 'patent, or privilege, of virginity'. A *patent* is a letter under the royal seal, conferring a certain privilege upon the holder: see Glossary. Almost any relation between two substantive-ideas can be expressed in Elizabethan English by making one of them an adjective of the other.

83. **the next new moon.** Cf. the note on the *Time* of the Play.

88. **as he would.** *He* is Egeus, rather than Demetrius.

92. Another characteristically antithetic line, with the antithesis emphasized by the aid both of alliteration and stress; thus—

"Thy crazed title to my certain right".

By *crazed* should be understood as not 'mad', but 'cracked', 'flawed': cf. Glossary.

98. *estate*, a verb = 'bestow'. It occurs again in *Tempest*, iv. 1. 85; *As You Like It*, v. 2. 13. Elizabethan English allows considerable freedom in the formation of verbs out of substantives. Cf. 'versing' (ii. 1. 67), 'childing' (ii. 1. 112), and see Abbott, § 290.

99. *as well derived*, derived of as good ancestors.

113. *self-affairs*, my own affairs. Cf. Glossary, s. v. *Self*.

122. Theseus has been obliged to turn for a moment from his 'self-affairs' to the affairs of state. Hippolyta has stood by, waiting until her lover shall be again free to give her his attention. Theseus would not have her think herself neglected. So he whispers a tender word as he leads her from the presence-chamber.

128-251. Mr. Fleay suggests that these lines ought to form a separate scene; the interview between the lovers could hardly take place in the palace. But it is carefully led up to in what precedes. Theseus' commands to Egeus and Demetrius to accompany him have no significance in the story: they are only the playwright's rather crude device to clear the stage for Lysander and Hermia. Moreover the *Manet Lysander and Hermia* of the F 1 stage-direction disposes of Fleay's view.

This is one of the characteristically lyrical passages of the play. Shakespeare makes no attempt at subtle characterization amongst the lovers. They chant the eternal commonplaces of passion; not inappropriate to their situation, because it is just in such moments of personal emotion that what was known as truism becomes recognized for truth; but not particularly dramatic, because they delay rather than help the action. This effect is to some extent balanced by the sudden resolve to quit Athens, which is dramatic enough, and an important point in the plot.

The lyrical nature of the dialogue, voice answering voice in a kind of antiphon, is noticeable. In lines 135-140 and lines 194-201 this takes the extreme form of *stichomuthia* or alternating lines. See Essay on Metre, § 16.

132-149. Compare with Lysander's complaint that of Adam in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, x. 898-906—

"For either

He never shall find out fit mate, but such  
As some misfortune brings him, or mistake;  
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain  
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd  
By a far worse; or, if she love, withheld  
By parents; or his happiest choice too late  
Shall meet, already link'd and wedlock-bound  
To a fell adversary, his hate or shame".

133. *tale or history*. Probably Shakespeare has in his mind such famous collections of stories of women as Ovid's *Heroides*, Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus*, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*,

and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. In Chaucer's poem occurs, amongst other legends, that of Thisbe of Babylon. See Introduction, p. 17, and Appendix E.

135. The grammatical construction is rather vague. 'It' appears to refer somewhat generally to the whole imagined situation.

136. *low* is Theobald's emendation for the *love* of the Qq. Ff. The change makes Hermia's echo of Lysander's complaint much more pointed and direct, and Malone supports it by quoting *Venus and Adonis*, lines 1136-40—

"Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend:  
It shall be waited on with jealousy,  
Find sweet beginning, but unsavoury end,  
Ne'er settled equally, but high or low,  
That all love's pleasure shall not match his woe".

139. *friends*. So Qq.: Ff. have *merit*.

143. *momentary*. So Qq.: Ff. have the more usual form *momentarie*. See Glossary.

144. *Swift as a shadow*, that is, the shadow of a cloud passing over the fields.

145-149. This splendid metaphor illustrates not only the brief span of love, but also its power to enlarge and purify the vision. Even as the lightning, it "unfolds both heaven and earth", presents both the spiritual and the material world under new aspects to the lover.

147. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 2. 117—

"I have no joy of this contract to-night;  
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;  
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be  
Ere one can say 'It lightens'".

149. Note the pathos of the final line, moving slowly and dying away without a stress—

"So' qu'ick bri'ght things co'me to confu'sion".

150. *ever*, always, constantly.

151. Note the accent, 'edi'ct', and see Essay on Metre, § 10 (i).

152. *teach our trial patience*. One of the compressed phrases, which became more and more characteristic of Shakespeare. The full sense is 'teach ourselves patience to endure our trial'.

158. *révénué*. See note on line 6.

159. *remote*. So Qq.: Ff. have *remou'd*.

160. *respects*, looks upon. See Glossary.

164. *forth thy father's house*. Shakespeare often omits the preposition 'from' after verbs of motion. Cf. Abbott, § 198. It is

suggested, however, in Abbott § 156, that *forth*, from being constantly used in such phrases as *forth from*, *forth of*, came in time to have a prepositional sense itself.

164. to-morrow night. See note on the *Time* of the Play.

167. The morning following the 'morrow' was to be once more the first of May, and therefore Hermia's early departure would not cause suspicion. Cf. iv. 1. 129, where Theseus says—

“No doubt they rose up early to observe  
The rite of May”.

Shakespeare has in his mind Chaucer's *Knights Tale*, 642, “And, for to doon his observaunce to May”, which is also followed in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, ii. 4. 49-51—

“You must be ready,  
To-morrow by the sun, to do observaunce  
To flow'ry May, in Dian's wood”.

The phrase recurs in Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseide*, ii. 112, “And lat us don to May som observaunce”. The superstitions connected with May-day are perhaps the most living part of English folk-lore. A full account of them is given in Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, vol. i., pp. 212-234; and their primitive significance is discussed in Frazer's *Golden Bough*, i. 72-86. See also Herrick's charming poem, *Corinna's Going a Maying*.

165. the wood, a league without the town. Cf. i. 2. 86, 87, “the palace wood, a mile without the town”. Halliwell notes that the length of the league was variously estimated. In Holland's translation of Ammianus Marcellinus it is reckoned as a mile and a half.

170. the golden head. According to the classical legend, Cupid had sharp golden arrows to inspire happy loves, blunt leaden arrows for the hapless ones. Shakespeare may have got the notion from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i. 467-471—

“Eque sagittifera promsit duo tela pharetra  
Diversorum operum: fugat hoc facit illud amorem,  
Quod facit, auratum est et cuspidē fulget acuta;  
Quod fugat, obtusum est et habet sub arundine plumbum”.

Thus Englished by Arthur Golding (ed. 1587)—

“There from his quiver full of shafts two arrows he did take  
Of sundry powers; t'one causeth love, the t'other doth it slake.  
That causeth love is all of gold, with point full sharp and bright,  
That chaseth love is blunt, whose steel with leaden head is dight”.

Cf. *Twelfth Night*, i. 1. 35—

“How will she love, when the rich golden shaft  
Hath kill'd the flock of all affections else  
That live in her”.

Also James I., *The King's Quair*—

“And with the first that headed is of gold,  
He smitēs soft and that has easy cure”.

And Sidney, *Arcadia*, Bk. ii.—

“But arrowes two, and tipt with gold or lead”.

171. From this point the lyricism of the scene is enhanced by the use of rhyme. See Essay on Metre, § 17 (i) *b*.

171. the simplicity of Venus' doves. The doves of Venus are familiar to classical mythology, but Shakespeare, like a true child of the Renaissance, has given them a meaning taken from quite another source: “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”.

172. The allusion in this line is probably to the *cestus* or girdle of Venus.

173. The story of Æneas and Dido seems to have impressed Shakespeare's imagination more than any other classical legend, judging by the frequency of his allusions to it.

180. The introduction of Helena does not alter the tone of the scene. She takes her share in the utterance of lyrical love-sentiments; but her resolve to follow the lovers, with Demetrius, serves as a second step in the thickening of the plot.

182. your fair. So Qq.: the Ff. have *you fair*. For ‘fair’ as a substantive, see Glossary.

187. Yours would I catch. This is Hanmer's probable emendation for the *your words I catch* of the Qq.: *your words I do catch* of the Ff.

191, 192. ‘If I had all the world, but had not Demetrius, I would give all the world, to have your favour, and so win him.’

194–201. The antithetical structure should be observed, not only in the *stichomuthia* or balance of line against line, but also within the lines themselves.

200. So Q 1: Q 2 Ff. have *His folly, Helena, is none of mine*, thus slightly weakening the antithesis.

207. Cf. ii. 1. 243, and Milton, *Paradise Lost*, i. 254—

“The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven”.

211. Cf. ii. 1. 14, 15—

“I must go seek some dewdrops here,  
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear”.

215. faint. Is this an epithet of smell or of colour? In *Winter's Tale*, iv. 4. 122, it is certainly the colour that Shakespeare notes, of the

“pale primroses,  
That die unmarried, ere they can behold  
Bright Phoebus in his strength”.

And so, too, in *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 220—

“thou shalt not lack  
The flower that’s like thy face, pale primrose”.

**216–219. sweet...stranger companies.** So Theobald for the *sweld...strange companions* of the Qq. Ff.; rightly, I think, on account of the rhyme. He adds, “Our author very often uses the substantive ‘stranger’ adjectively, and companies to signify ‘companions’”; as in *Richard II.*, i. 3. 143, “the stranger paths of banishment”, and in *Henry V.*, i. 1. 55, “His companies unletter’d, rude and shallow”. Heath supports *counsel sweet* by Psalm lv. 15, “We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends”. I quote these arguments because a departure from the Qq. Ff. in a play where the text is generally as correct in these editions as it is in a *Midsummer Night’s Dream* requires some justification.

**226. other some.** *Some* has the force of a substantive, ‘men’, ‘persons’. Cf. Abbott, § 21 and p. 6, where he quotes from Heywood—

“Some with small fare they be not pleased,  
Some with much fare they be diseased,  
Some with mean fare be scant appeased,  
But of all somes none is displeased  
To be welcome”.

**231. admiring of.** The *of* is explained by the fact that *admiring* is here a verbal noun, before which a preposition, such as ‘in’, has dropped out. Cf. Abbott, § 178. Sometimes the preposition is retained in the abbreviated form ‘a-’, as in *Othello*, iv. 1. 188, “I would have him nine years a-killing”. Cf. Abbott, § 24.

**232. quantity.** Here used, I think, in the sense of ‘large quantity’, just as it has the exactly opposite sense in *Taming of the Shrew*, iv. 3. 112, “Thou rag, thou quantity, thou remnant”. There seems no point in explaining it by ‘proportion’ as in *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 177, “For women’s love and fear holds quantity”.

**235. wing’d Cupid painted blind.** Rolfe says “This is a modern idea, no trace of it being found in the old Greek or Latin poets”. Douce says that the earliest English writer who gives it is Chaucer, in his translation of the *Roman de la Rose*: “The god of love, blind as a stone”, and that the line is not in the French original. Prof. Manby kindly refers me to *The House of Fame*, i. 137—

“Her dowves, and daun Cupido,  
Hir blinde son”.

**249. a dear expense,** ‘an expense I would gladly incur’.



## Scene 2.

The first scene started the story of the lovers, and showed that it was connected with the wedding-day of Theseus. The second scene starts the story of the rustics. This also is connected with the wedding-day, for it is on that occasion that the interlude is to be acted. And we learn at the end that the rustics, like the lovers, will be in the wood on the morrow night.

A fondness for the drama appears to have been widely spread over the England of Elizabeth, and probably Shakespeare had been present at just such scenes, as he here describes, in the villages of Warwickshire. Similar episodes may be found in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and in the Oxford play of *Narcissus* (see Appendix F). But, though we may not hold with Mr. Fleay that Shakespeare is making a direct hit at Lord Sussex's Players (see Introduction, p. 9), he probably does intend a delicate satire upon some of the foibles of actors generally. Such a performer as Bottom, supremely conscious of his own importance, anxious to play all the 'fat' parts himself, and especially the noisiest part, ordering all his fellows and even the stage-manager about the place, is to be found in nearly every company, amateur or professional. It is a lifelike bit of fooling.

Prose is used for the speech of the rustics throughout. Shakespeare always regards it as appropriate to comic scenes, and vulgar personages; and in this play it serves (a) to distinguish the talk of the rustics off the stage from the lines of their interlude, and (b) to emphasize the contrast in Act iii. sc. 1. and Act iv. sc. 1., between Bottom and the fairies. See Essay on Metre, § 19.

**2. You were best.** In Middle English, preference is regularly expressed by an impersonal construction with a dative. Thus *you were best* is really = (To) you (it) were best. Shakespeare keeps the idiom, but is probably not conscious that 'you' is a dative, for he has, e.g. "I were better" (*2 Henry IV.*, i. 2. 145), and not 'Me were better'. See Abbott, § 230.

**generally.** Bottom means 'individually'. The particular form of humour, which consists of either (1) using words which bear an exactly opposite sense to that which is intended, as here, or (2) using words which have a different sense, but a similar sound to that which is intended, as in 'obscenely' (lines 92, 93), is common to the illiterate clowns of Shakespeare's earlier plays, from the Costard of *Love's Labour's Lost* to the Dogberry of *Much Ado about Nothing*. Very likely it was part of the dramatic method of Will Kempe, who was the chief comic actor of the Lord Chamberlain's company up to 1599. We now call this kind of mistake a 'Malapropism', from its use by Sheridan in the character of Mrs. Malaprop in the *Rivals*. The name is of course derived from the French *mal à propos*, 'out of place', 'irrelevant'.

5. interlude. Here used in its original sense of a play (*ludus*) in between (*inter*) the courses of a banquet or the diversions of a revel. Theseus speaks of the performance in v. 1. 33, 34 as something—

“To wear away this long age of three hours  
Between our after-supper and bed-time”.

The word came to be used for a ‘play’ in a more general sense.

8. grow to a point. So the Qq.: F1 has *grow on to a point*. I should explain the phrase as meaning ‘do the thing thoroughly, completely’: see Glossary, s.v. *Point*. But it is generally taken as equivalent to ‘come to the point’.

9-11. The most lamentable comedy...and a merry. Cf. v. 1. 56-60—

“A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus  
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.  
Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!  
That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.  
How shall we find the concord of this discord?”

Shakespeare is burlesquing the title-pages of the plays published in his time, of which an example may be found in Thomas Preston's *A lamentable Tragedy, mixed full of pleasant Mirth, containing The Life of Cambises, King of Persia* (1570?). Cf. iv. 2. 18, note.

Grammarians call this ‘contrast by juxtaposition of opposite conceptions’ an Oxymoron. Shakespeare uses the device somewhat more seriously in *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 1. 182—

“Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!  
O any thing, of nothing first create!  
O heavy lightness! serious vanity!  
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!  
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!  
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!”

18. gallant. So Qq.: the Ff. have *gallantly*. Shakespeare uses adjectives as adverbs freely. Cf. Abbott, § 1.

21. condole. Bottom uses the word in its ordinary Shakespearian sense: see Glossary.

22. humour, ‘temperament’, ‘disposition’: see Glossary.

a tyrant. Bottom's dramatic ideal is formed upon the ranting blood-and-thunder melodramatic style of tragedy, which was so popular when Shakespeare began to write, and which finds an artistic expression in the work of Marlowe. Shakespeare has his serious criticism of a similar manner amongst actors in *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 9—

“O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-Herods Herod: pray you, avoid it”.

Besides the natural liking of the groundlings for noise, two literary influences helped to form the type of drama in question. One was the popularity of Seneca's sensational tragedies, on which see R. Fischer, *Zur Kunstentwicklung der englischen Tragödie*, and J. W. Cunliffe, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*. The other was the tradition of the Miracle-plays, in which certain personages, such as Herod, the 'tyrant', were always treated in a blustering vein.

**22. play Eracles.** Hercules, like Herod, was no doubt a typical stage tyrant. The Cl. Pr. ed. quotes Sidney, *Arcadia* (1598 ed.), Bk. i. p. 50, "With the voyce of one that playeth Hercules in a play". The first mention of Hercules in English drama is in a list of properties for a 'mask of Greek worthies', temp. Edward VI., which includes 'a great clobb for one of them representing Hercules'. Seneca's *Hercules Furens* was translated by Jasper Heywood in 1561. The old actor in Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) says, "The twelve labors of Hercules have I terribly thundered on the stage". Hercules occurs as a Worthy in *Love's Labour's Lost* (1589?). It appears from Henslowe's Diary 'the first part of Herculous' was played by the Admiral's men at the Rose as a new enterlude on 7th May, 1595, and 'the second part of Hercolas' on 23rd May, 1595. These plays are identified by Mr. Fleay with Heywood's *Silver Age* and *Brazen Age*. On 16th May, 1598, Henslowe bought from Martin Slaughter the books of 'two parts of Hercolus', and on 16th July, 1598, he lent Thomas Downton 40 shillings "for to bye a Robe to play Hercolas in".

**23. tear a cat**, apparently a proverbial phrase for violent action on the stage. Cf. Day, *The Isle of Guls* (1606), "a whole play of such tear-cat thunderclaps"; and *Histrionastix* (1610)—

"Sir, is this you would rend and tear the cat

Upon a stage, and now march like a drown'd rat?";

and *The Roaring Girl* (1611), where is a character Tear-cat, who says, "I am called by those who have seen my valour, Tear-cat".

**make all split.** Probably a nautical metaphor from the splitting of masts in a hurricane. Cf. *Tempest*, i. i. 65, "We split, we split". The phrase recurs in Beaumont and Fletcher, *Scornful Lady*, ii. 3, "Two roaring boys of Rome, that made all split". Cf. also the phrase, "split the ears of the groundlings" in the passage quoted from *Hamlet* above.

**24-31.** Printed as prose in the Qq. Ff. Rolfe suggests that these lines may be a burlesque of a translation of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* published in 1581. He quotes:

"O Lord of ghosts! whose fiery flash  
That forth thy hand doth shake,  
Doth cause the trembling lodges twain  
Of Phœbus' car to shake".

And again,

"The roaring rocks have quaking stirr'd,  
And none thereat hath push'd;  
Hell gloomy gates I have brast ope  
Where grisly ghosts all hush'd  
Have stood".

But of course the passage may be a quotation from some actual play.

32. Bottom's self-importance, and the way in which he divides the company into (1) Himself, (2) The rest of the players, are delicious.

37. a wandering knight, a knight-errant.

39, 40. a beard coming. In Elizabethan companies the women's parts were regularly played by boys. Hamlet says to the player in *Hamlet*, ii. 2. 442, "O, my old friend, thy face is valanced since I saw thee last: comest thou to beard me in Denmark?"

44. monstrous little, another comic Oxymoron.

Thisne, Thisne. The Cambridge editors say "It may be questioned whether the true reading is not *thisne*, *thisne*; that is, 'in this manner', a meaning which 'thissen' has in several dialects. See Halliwell's *Archaic Dict.* 'So-ne' is used in the same way in Suffolk." But the Qq. Ff. print the words in italics, as if they were proper names. Perhaps they represent Bottom's first attempt to pronounce 'Thisbe' in 'a monstrous little voice'.

51, 54. Thisby's mother... Pyramus' father... Thisby's father. It is to be noted that these personages do not appear either in the rehearsal, or in the final performance. See note to iii. 1. 67-94.

64, 65. fright the duchess and the ladies. Cf. iii. 1. 28, note.

69, 70. have no more discretion but to hang us. There is something of a play upon words here, as *discretion* may mean either 'choice' or 'wits'.

70. aggravate. The usual Elizabethan sense is 'exaggerate', 'make large'. See Glossary. Bottom, of course, means just the opposite.

71. roar you. *You* is the old 'ethic' dative, in the sense of 'for your pleasure', 'for your advantage'. See Abbott, § 220.

sucking dove. On April Fool's Day, one sends children to look for 'pigeon's milk'.

77. Bottom is fond of managing others, but he does not always see when he is being managed himself.

80. your, a colloquial use, like that of the Latin *iste*, equivalent to 'that you wot of'. Cf. Abbott, § 221.

83. French crowns, a pun. A 'French crown' was (a) a coin, of pale gold; (b) a bald head.

86. to-morrow night. See note on the *Time* of the Play.

92, 93. obscenely. It is generally said that Bottom means 'obscurely'. I incline to think he really means 'unseen', which gives a much nearer sound. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. i. 145, Costard uses 'obscenely' for 'seemly'—

"When it comes so smoothly off, so obscenely, as it were, so fit".

95. hold or cut bow-strings. This is clearly a metaphor from archery, though it is diversely explained. I think it means 'Hold (*i.e.* keep your promises) or give up the play'. To cut bow-strings for archers would be much the same as burning their ships for seamen. Capell, however, says: "When a party was made at butts, assurance of meeting was given in the words of that phrase, the sense of the person using them being that he would 'hold' or keep promise, or they might 'cut his bowstrings', demolish him for an archer". The only near parallel is in Chapman and Shirley's *The Ball* (1639)—

"*Scutilla*. ...have you devices

To jeer the rest?

*Lucia*. All the regiment on 'em, or I'll break my bowstrings".

### Act II.—Scene I.

So far both the main stories of the plot have gone on straightforwardly. The "morrow night", the night of the second day, has come, and both the lovers and the rustics reach the wood as they had purposed. With the second Act complications begin. And the motive force in the complication of both stories comes from the personages of yet another story, that of the fairies.

In the present scene, lines 1-187 introduce the fairy story, and put us in possession of its opening situation; lines 188-246 connect it with the story of the lovers. Oberon discovers the relations of Helena and Demetrius, and resolves to interfere. It must, however, be observed that the fairies are not merely complicating agents in other people's stories. Their quarrels and jealousies, and the trick played by Oberon on Titania, independently illustrate the "lawlessness of love", which is the central idea of the play. The fairies are, in a sense, always young, and, therefore, they never outgrow the characteristics of youthful love. Also, they are supernatural, and as such symbolize the element of mystery in the said central idea. Cf. Introduction, p. 24.

The Appendix A on *The Fairy-world* should be carefully read with this scene.

2-13. On the metre, see Essay on Metre, § 17 (ii).

3-5. Thorough. So Q 1: Q 2 Ff. have *Through*. Shakespeare uses either of these alternative forms to suit his metre. Halliwell

considers this passage to have been imitated from *The Faerie Queene*, vi. 285—

“Through hills and dales, through bushes and through breres”.

He argues that as the sixth book of *The Faerie Queene* was not printed until January, 1594, the play must have been written after that date. The argument is thin, for (a) the two passages may well be independent, and (b) if either is an imitator, it may be Spenser. There is no reason why the song should not have reached Ireland before 1596. There is another reminiscence of the passage in Drayton's *Nymphidia*, 309-311—

“Thorough Brake, thorough Brier,  
Thorough Mucke, thorough Mier,  
Thorough Water, thorough Fier,  
And thus goes Puck about it”.

7. moonës. The Qq. Ff. have *moon's*, but the metre requires the longer form. It is the inflected genitive of Middle English. Cf. iv. 1. 93, “Trip we after nightës shade”; and see König, p. 15, and Essay on Metre, § 8 (i) *b*.

sphere. According to modern astronomy the moon moves in its ‘sphere’ or ‘orbit’; but in the Ptolemaic system the sphere itself was supposed to move. The earth was conceived as the centre of nine or ten consecutive spheres, solid rings which rotated round it, carrying the planets and fixed stars. A more detailed description of this cosmogony may be found in Masson's Globe edition of Milton, pp. 19, *sqq.*

9. her orbs upon the green, the fairy rings. Cf. *Tempest*, v. 1. 36—

“You demi-puppets that  
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,  
Whereof the ewe not bites”,

and see Appendix A, §§ 12, 13 (*e*). These rings appear to be really due to certain fungi, which increase very rapidly, spread outwards from a centre, and fertilize the herbage by their decay.

10. pensioners. Elizabeth kept a body of gentlemen-at-arms under the title of Gentlemen-Pensioners, who wore a gorgeous uniform.

14, 15. A four-foot and a five-foot line rhymed together. Cf. ll. 41, 42, and see Essay on Metre § 17 (i) *ad fin.*

15. a pearl. Cf. i. 1. 211. This passage is imitated in the anonymous play, *The Wisdome of Doctor Dodypoll* (1600), iii. 5—

“’Twas I that led you through the painted meads,  
Where the light fairies danced upon the flowers,  
Hanging on every leaf an orient pearl”.

It has been supposed that *Doctor Dodypoll* was written as early as 1596, because Nash in his preface to *Gabriel Harvey's Hunt is Up*, printed in that year, mentions "Doctor Dodypowle". But the Cl. Pr. editors point out that the name was a synonym for a block-head as early as Latimer's time. Nash does not, therefore, necessarily refer to the play.

Another imitation of these lines may be found in Carew's *Pastoral Dialogue*—

"See, love, the blushes of the morn appear;  
And now she hangs her pearly store,  
Robb'd from the Eastern shore,  
I' th' cowslip's ball and rose's ear".

16. **lob of spirits.** See Glossary, *s. v.* and Appendix A, § 19.

21. **Because that.** Shakespeare uses *because*, *that*, and *because that*, indifferently and in the same sense. See Abbot, §§ 285, 287.

23. **changeling.** See Appendix, A, §§ 13 (j), 20. Titania gives a different account of her boy in lines 123-136.

29. **spangled starlight sheen.** Cf. Milton, *Comus*, 1003—

"Far above, in spangled sheen".

32. **Either** must be scanned here, and in ii. 2. 256, as a monosyllable, on the analogy of 'whether' (i. 1. 69). Cf. Essay on Metre, § 8 (ix) *b*. Pope read *Or*.

33. **sprite.** So Q 1: Q 2 F 1 have *spirit*. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 8 (ii) *c*.

33-38. Cf. Milton, *L'Allegro*, 104-114—

"And he, by Friar's lantern led,  
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat  
To earn his cream bowl duly set,  
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
His shadowy flail had threshed the corn  
That ten day-labourers could not end;  
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,  
And stretched out all the chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,  
And crop-full out of doors he flings,  
Ere the first cock his matins rings".

35, 36. **fright...Skim.** Note the change of person, from the grammatical antecedent 'he' to the logical antecedent 'you'.

39. Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ix. 634-640—

"As when a wandering fire,...  
...(Which oft, they say, some evil spirit attends),  
Hovering and blazing with delusive light,  
Misleads the amazed night-wanderer from his way".

41, 42. A four-foot and a five-foot line rhymed together. Cf. ll. 14, 15, and see Essay on Metre, § 17 (i) *ad fin.*

46. *filly*. So Q 1: Q 2 Ff. have *silly*.

47. a *gossip's bowl*, probably filled with 'lamb's wool' a compound of ale, nutmeg, sugar, toast, and roasted crabs or apples. Cf. Breton's *Fantasticks* (January), "An Apple and Nutmeg make a gossip's cup".

51. Cf. *Richard II.*, v. 1. 40—

"In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire  
With good old folks, and let them tell the tales  
Of woeful ages long ago betid";

and *Winter's Tale*, ii. 1. 25—

"A sad tale's best for winter: I have one  
Of sprites and goblins".

54. *tailor cries*. Various critics have proposed to read '*rails or cries*', or '*tail-sore*' *cries* (!), or '*traitor*' *cries*. But there are at least two adequate explanations of the text as it stands. Johnson says, "The custom of crying *tailor* at a sudden fall backwards, I think I remember to have observed. He that slips beside his chair, falls as a tailor squats upon his board." Halliwell thinks that *tailor* is equivalent to 'thief', and quotes *Pasquil's Night-Cap* (1612)—

"Thieving is now an occupation made,  
Though men the name of tailor do it give".

*Tailor* in this sense is probably a corruption of the older *taylard*. Furness would read *tailer*, and explain it as a fall on the tail, after the analogy of 'header'. Halliwell's explanation seems the best, as it is the victim's outcry that is in question and not that of the bystanders.

54, 55. *cough...laugh*. The Qq. Ff. spell *coffe...loffe*, and this probably represents the old pronunciation. Halliwell quotes a ballad of Mother Hubbard, who went to buy her dog a 'coffin', and when she came home found him 'loffing'. But that the pronunciation of *laughing* was a moot point appears from Marston's *Parasitaster* (1606), Act iv., "Another has vowed to get the consumption of the lungs, or to leave to posterity the true orthography and pronunciation of *laughing*". (A curious 17th-century forerunner of Browning's Grammarian!)

56. *waxen*. Farmer suggested *yexen*, i.e. 'hiccup'.

58. *fairy*, a trisyllable. See Essay on Metre, § 8 (viii) and Glossary.

60-145. The eternal childishness of the fairies is seen in the light-hearted way in which they carry on their quarrels and reconciliations, making only another sport of their jars.



66-68. **Corin... Phillida.** These are traditional names of lovers in pastoral poetry. The first genuine English pastoral appeared in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557) with the title, *Harpalus' Complaint of Phillida's Love bestowed on Corin that loved her not, and denied him that loved her*.

67. **versing**, 'making verses of'. Cf. i. i. 98, note.

69. **steppe.** So Q 1: Q 2 Ff. have *steep*. Cf. Milton, *Comus*, 139—

"Ere the blabbing Eastern scout,  
'The nice Morn, on the Indian steep',  
From her cabin'd loop-hole peep".

The Q 1 reading has been attacked on the ground that *steppe* does not occur elsewhere in contemporary writers, and that in iii. 2. 85 Q 1 misprints *slippe* for *sleep*. But it is a rule of textual criticism that a rare word is more likely to be corrupted into a common one than *vice-versa*.

70. **the bouncing Amazon.** Hippolyta was queen of the Amazons. See the passages from North's Plutarch, quoted in Appendix D. 'Bouncing' is Titania's scornful epithet, flung at a rival of more majestic build than herself. See Appendix I. on *Titania and Theseus*.

71. Note the characteristically antithetic line, and see Essay on Metre, § 12 (i).

75. **glance at**, 'attack'. See Glossary.

78-80. **Perigenia ... Aegles ... Ariadne ... Antiopa.** Shakespeare got the roll of Theseus' mistresses from North's Plutarch. See Appendix D.

78. I should scan 'Périgénia', not 'Périgēniā', 'Perigenía', or 'Perigenía'; as North has 'Perigouna'.

79. **Aegles.** The Qq. Ff. have *Eagles*. Most editors read *Aegle*, which is the correct classical form of the name, but Shakespeare found it in North as *Aegles*, and probably wrote that.

84-116. On the probable allusion in this passage to the tempests of 1594, see Introduction, p. 10, and Appendix C.

The fairies of a *Midsummer Night's Dream* are elemental beings, though not so completely so as those in *The Tempest*. Their bickering disturbs the serenity of the moon and the winds. See Appendix A, § 13 (d).

82. **the middle summer's spring.** See note on the *Time* of the Play. The nearest parallel to the phrase is in Churchyard's *Charitie* (1595), where a *summer spring* apparently stands for 'the beginning of summer'. *Spring* means 'beginning', in such phrases as "the day-spring from on high" (*S. Luke*, i. 78), and "the spring of day" (*2 Henry IV.*, iv. 4. 35).

84. Another markedly antithetic line.

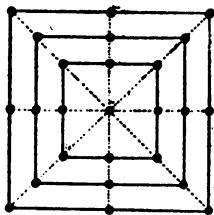
paved. A happy epithet for a clear fountain, with a pebbled bottom.

86. ringlets, not 'curls', but 'dances in a ring'.

88. piping to us in vain. A reminiscence of "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented".

91. Hath. So the Qq. Ff. Modern editors read *Have*, but the singular verb after a plural subject is too common in Shakespeare to require much remark. Cf. Abbott, §§ 332-338 (especially § 334), and Appendix iv. to Mr. G. C. Moore Smith's edition of *Henry V.* in this series.

98. nine men's morris. A game played on a table like the one here figured. Each player had a certain number, generally nine, of men or pins, and the object of the game was to move these, according to certain laws, so as to get three in a row. The table was either drawn on a board, or cut in the turf. The name is probably a corruption of the French *merelles* or *mereaux*, i.e. 'counters' (see Glossary), and the game is also called in various places by the names of *Merrils*, or *Ninepenny* (*Nine Pin*), *Five-penny*, or *Three-penny Morris*. It must be carefully distinguished from *Nine Pins*, and from *Nine Holes*, in which a ball was rolled at nine holes cut in the ground, or at nine arches, as in *Bagatelle*. See Alice B. Gomme, *Traditional Games*, i. 414.



99. quaint mazes. On certain greens, such as St. Catherine's Hill at Winchester, complicated labyrinths are marked out on the grass, and are kept fresh by boys running along the windings of them.

101-103. The connection of ideas in this passage has puzzled the commentators. I think they have been misled (*a*) by the punctuation of the Qq. Ff., which have only a comma at the end of line 101; and (*b*) by the assumption that 'hymns and carols' belong necessarily to 'winter' nights. I prefer to put a full stop after line 101, and begin a new period with line 102. Then I should explain the passage as follows:—In lines 88-101 Titania describes the inclement summer due to the revenge of the winds. She concludes: "The summer is so bad, that men wish it were winter". Then she begins again: "Not only have we offended the winds, but we have neglected the hymns and carols due from us to the moon. Therefore she too is wrathful, and does her part to spoil the weather". The explanation of the 'hymns and carols', as addressed to the moon.

may be supported from I. i. 73, "Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon". The nuns, nymphs, and fairies are all treated as in some ways identical by Shakespeare in the play, though I am not quite sure whether he is conscious that Titania, or Diana, was herself, in another aspect, the Moon.

**101. human mortals.** The two terms may be merely tautologous; or there may be a distinction between '*human* mortals' and '*fairy* mortals'. The fairies were not always considered as exempt from death. See Appendix A, §§ 6, 13 (*g*). But I incline to think that Shakespeare does so consider them here, and that the votaress of line 123 was not a fairy, but distinguished from Titania by being mortal.

**winter here.** Hanmer proposed *winter cheer*, but there is no need for any change of text.

**102.** All the critics have been misled by Steevens, the "Puck of commentators", who says: "Hymns and carols, in the time of Shakespeare, during the season of Christmas, were sung every night about the streets".

**103, 104. the moon, the governess of floods...washes all the air.** Cf. "the watery moon" (line 162); also *Hamlet*, i. 1. 119—

"the moist star

Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands";

and *Winter's Tale*, i. 2. 426—

"You may as well

Forbid the sea for to obey the moon".

Shakespeare regards the moon, not only as ruling the tides, but also as drawing up moisture from the earth. It is true that a 'moist', 'watery', or hazy moon is generally followed by rain.

**105. Accent *rheu'matic*.** From here onwards Titania describes a general confusion of the seasons, rather than the actual facts of any one season.

**106. this distemperature, i.e.** the disorder of the winds and moon. Malone interprets it, less probably, as referring to the dissensions between Oberon and Titania.

**109. thin, i.e.** 'scantily covered'. This is Tyrwhitt's conjecture for the *chin* of the Qq. Ff. You can hardly hang a chaplet on a chin. Grey proposed *chill*.

**112. childing.** So the Qq. F 1-3: see Glossary. F 4 has *chiding*.

**113. Their wonted liveries, 'their wonted outward appearances'.** The line may either be scanned—

"Their wo'nt | ed li'v | eries, | a'nd the | ma'z'd wo'rd",

which requires a rather undue stress on 'and', to avoid the succession of four unstressed syllables, or,

"Their wo'nt | ed li'v | eries, and | the ma' | zed wo'rd".

114. **their increase**, *i.e.* the natural products of each season, which no longer serve to distinguish them, by coming at their true time.

123. Cf. line 23 and note.

135. **being mortal**. Cf. line 101, note.

136, 137. A succession of lines which all begin in the same way is much in Shakespeare's earlier manner. Cf. *e.g. Merchant of Venice*, v. 1. 193, 194—

“If you did know to whom I gave the ring,  
If you did know for whom I gave the ring,” &c.

138. **intend you stay**. The particle ‘to’ was much more freely omitted before the infinitive in Elizabethan than in modern English. Cf. Abbott, § 349.

146–168. On the supposed historical allusions in this passage, see Appendix G.

146. **thou shalt not from this grove**. A verb of motion is often omitted between an auxiliary and a preposition of motion. Cf. Abbott, § 405.

149. **Since**, in the sense of ‘when’. Cf. Abbott, § 132.

153. **spheres**. Cf. line 7, note.

155. Oberon can see what Puck can not. Cf. Appendix A, § 14.

156. **cold**. The moon is *cold*, physically, because her rays do not burn like the sun's, and spiritually, as the patroness of chastity. Cf. line 162.

158. **vestal**. The priestesses of Vesta at Rome, like those of Artemis-Diana at Athens, were vowed to perpetual virginity.

**by the west**, *i.e.* in England, to the west of Athens.

162. **watery**. Cf. lines 103, 104, note.

168. **love-in-idleness**. The *Viola tricolor*, or common pansy, is sometimes of a milky-white colour, sometimes splashed and stained with purple. The difference is probably due to the nature of the soil it grows in. Shakespeare's conceit is founded upon divers stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which flowers are created or are changed in colour by the blood of some hero or heroine. Such is the staining of the mulberry by the blood of Pyramus. See Appendix E. Herrick makes frequent use of similar ideas, and sings “How roses first came red, and lilies white”. Many of the popular names of the pansy treat it as the emblem of boy-and-girl love. It is called, for instance, besides ‘Love in Idleness’, ‘Cuddle me to you’, and ‘Meet me in the Entry, and Kiss me in the Buttery’.

174. Cf. Chapman, *Bussy D'Ambois*, Act i. sc. 1—

“In tall ships richly built and ribbed with brass,  
To put a girdle round about the world”.

184. **another herb**, the ‘Dian's bud’. Cf. iv. 1. 72.

186. I am invisible. It is not necessary for Oberon to tell Puck this, but it is necessary for Shakespeare to tell the audience, to explain how it is that Demetrius and Helena do not see him during what follows.

190. slay...slayeth. So Thirlby for the *stay...stayeth* of the Qq. Ff.

192. wode within this wood, a pun. Q 1 distinguishes the words as *wodde* and *wood*; in Q 2 F 1 both are spelt *wood*. See Glossary.

195-197. I do not think that Helena is drawing a distinction between iron and steel. The point seems to be, 'you draw my heart as adamant draws iron; yet, though my heart be true as steel, it is not in other respects like iron; *i.e.* it is not hard'.

To get this sense, we must explain 'for' in the sense of 'for all that'. Abbott, § 154, quotes a passage from North's Plutarch, where 'for all these reasons' stands as a translation of '*nonobstant toutes ces raisons*'. Some editors adopt Lettsom's *though my heart*.

195. adamant is here 'loadstone', more usually 'diamond'. See Glossary.

201. nor I cannot. A double negative is common in Shakespeare. Cf. Abbott, § 406.

208. worser. A double comparative or superlative is also frequently found. Cf. 'more better' (iii. i. 18). Abbott, § 11, explains the idiom as giving emphasis, but here at least it seems to be only due to the need for another syllable.

220, 221. The Qq. Ff. punctuation is—

*"Your virtue is my privilege: for that  
It is".*

The alteration in the text, due to Malone, seems to me to give a better sense, and a better rhythm. Neither pauses after the fourth foot nor run-on lines are characteristic of this play. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 16.

231. The story of the flight of Daphne from Apollo, until she was turned into a laurel, is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i. 452, sqq.

235. stay, 'stay for'.

243. a heaven of hell. The opposite idea to that contained in i. i. 207.

244. upon here denotes the cause or instrument. Cf. Abbott, § 191.

245. Oberon again becomes an actor in the scene, and the verse consequently assumes a lyrical rhymed cast.

249. A difficult line to scan. Pope boldly read *whereon*. Other critics treat 'where' or 'wild' or 'thyme' as a dissyllable. It may be an octosyllabic line, with a tripping anapaestic third foot—

"I know' | a bank' | where the wild' | thyme' blows".

The trisyllable, followed by a spondee, prevents the line from being felt as too short. But anapaests are rare in Shakespeare's early plays, possibly even rarer than the elision of *the* before a consonant,

"I know' | a bank' | where th' wild' | thyme' blows'".

See Essay on Metre, §§ 8 (v), 12 (iii), 14.

250. grows. Cf. line 91, note.

oxlips. The true oxlip is the plant known to botanists as *Primula elatior*, but the plant commonly so called is a hybrid between the primrose and the cowslip. "Bold oxlips" are among the flowers of Perdita's imagined nosegay in *Winter's Tale*, iv. 4. 124.

251. woodbine, probably honeysuckle, but see iv. 1. 47, note.

It is possible to scan

"Quite o' | ver can' | opied with | lusc'ious | wood'bine'",

but this requires an awkward elision before 'p' in the third foot, and an awkward inversion of accent in the fourth foot. I should prefer, with Theobald, to read *lush*. The spelling of Q 1 is *over-canopi'd*, that of Q 2 Ff. *over-canoped* or *over-cannoped*. Perhaps, therefore, if the word is shortened it should be by elision, not of 'o', but of 'ie'.

252. musk-roses. The name is generally given in the Herbars to a large single garden rose, the *Rosa moschata*. If Shakespeare intends a wild flower it is perhaps the low-growing brown-calyxed *Rosa arvensis*.

eglantine, the sweet-brier, or *Rosa rubiginosa*. Arviragus says of Imogen in *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 220—

"Thou shalt not lack.....

The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,  
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath".

Milton, however, in *L'Allegro* distinguishes the eglantine from the sweet-brier, but Milton did not know much about flowers. Cf. Ellacombe, *Plant-lore of Shakespeare*.

263, 264. man...on. Did Shakespeare pronounce 'man' with the broad Scotch sound of *mon*?

268. Another Biblical reminiscence; cf. *S. Luke*, vii. 8, "I say...to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it".

## Scene 2.

Lines 1-26, with their song and dance, are part of the masque-like element in the play. The rest of the scene serves to advance the action of the fairy story and of the lover story. In the fairy story, lines 27-34 bring about the complication for which the motive was provided by the jealousy of Oberon in the last scene, and of which

the crisis will arrive in Act iii. sc. 1. In the lover story (lines 35-156), the crisis, which consists of the turning of both Demetrius and Lysander from Hermia to Helena, is divided between the present scene and Act iii. sc. 2. Puck's mistake comes in as a second motive, to alter the effect of Oberon's whim, and thus it is that Lysander's eyes are anointed instead of those of Demetrius.

2. the third part of a minute. The fairies dwell in small degrees, both of time and space.

3. musk-rose buds. Cf. ii. 1. 252, note.

6. clamorous owl. Cf. *Macbeth*, ii. 3. 65—

“the obscure bird  
Clamoured the live-long night”.

9. double, *i.e.* forked.

11. Newts and blind-worms are harmless enough, but ‘eye of newt’ and ‘blindworm’s sting’ are included among the poisonous elements of the witches’ caldron in *Macbeth*, iv. 1. 14-16.

13. Philomel, the Greek name for the nightingale.

20. spiders were held to be poisonous. Cf. *Richard II.*, ii. 1. 14, “Thy spiders, that suck up thy venom” (*i.e.* ‘earth’s venom’).

27-34. The trochaic metre used here and in lines 66-83 is Shakespeare’s favourite rhythm for supernatural speakers. See Essay on Metre, § 17 (ii).

30, 31. ounce and Pard, at any rate, were never found either at Stratford or Athens. But in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare introduces a lion into Arden.

35-65. There is not, as has been said in the Introduction, much character-drawing among the lovers, but there is a contrast between the maidenliness of Hermia in this scene and the somewhat oncoming disposition of Helena in ii. 1. 188-244.

46. ‘Love enables lovers to understand each other’s true meaning.’

49. interchained. So Qq.: the *interchanged* of the Ff. is less forcible.

77. A difficult line to scan. Pope read *near to*, and Walker *nearer*. But a line of more than four feet would be out of keeping, metrically, with the rest of the passage. I should read it with a rather forced accent on the last syllable to bring out the rhyme—

“Near this’ | lack-love’, | this kill’- | courtesy’”.

There are other iambic lines (*e.g.* line 74) scattered among the trochaic ones.

86. darkling, in the dark. Cf. *King Lear*, i. 4. 237, “So out went the candle, and we were left darkling”. Milton has, in *Paradise Lost*, iii. 39, of the nightingale—

“the wakeful bird  
Sings darkling”.

89. *lesser*. Cf. note on 'worsen' (ii. 1. 208).

*grace*, 'answer to prayer', and so, 'good fortune', 'happiness'.

99. *sphery eyne*, not, one may assume, 'spherical' eyes; but 'eyes that have the brightness of stars in their spheres'.

104. *Nature shows art*. So the Qq. F I has *Nature her shews art*, corrected by the later Ff. into *Nature here shews art*, and by Malone into *Nature shews her art*. Either reading will scan, according as you make a dissyllable or a trisyllable of 'Helena'.

108, 109. These jerky lines, with their staccato emphasis, and reiteration of the sound 'so...so...though...though', may be looked upon as comparatively youthful work.

113. *Helena I love*. So Q 1. Q 2, Ff. have *Helena now I love*.

118. *ripe*. I think it is right to take *ripe* as a verb here. Cf. *As You Like It*, ii. 7. 26—

"And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,  
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot".

119. My reason has reached the 'point', that is, the 'height' of human 'skill' or 'wisdom', in learning to appreciate Helena.

120. *marshal*. The herald or pursuivant, who leads a dignified procession. See Glossary.

122. *love's richest book*. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. 3. 350—

"From women's eyes this doctrine I derive :  
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;  
They are the books, the arts, the academes,  
That show, contain, and nourish all the world";

and *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 3. 81—

"Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,  
And what obscured in this fair volume lies,  
Find written in the margent of his eyes".

150. *you*. So Qq.: Ff. read *yet*.

154. *of all loves*. *Of* is often used in protestations: cf. Abbott, § 169. In *Othello*, iii. 1. 13, Q 1 has "*of all loves*", which is altered in F I into "*for love's sake*". Cf. also *Twelfth Night*, v. 1. 237, "Of charity, what kin are you to me?"

156. *Either* must be scanned as a monosyllable: cf. ii. 1. 32, note.

### Act III.—Scene 1.

In this scene the fairy story and the rustic story meet. The action is so contrived that one event, the translation of Bottom, serves as the complication in them both; in the rustic story, by breaking up



the rehearsal; in the fairy story, by providing a monster for Titania to fall in love with. The result of this combination is to provide just that absurd mixture of masque and antimasque, the broadly farcical and the delicately beautiful, which the Elizabethan taste loved.

Bottom and his fellows have come to the same part of the wood in which the last scene took place. The elves have departed on their various offices, and Titania is sleeping on her bank. She is, of course, invisible to the rustics.

4. **tiring-house**, that is, 'attiring-house' or 'green-room'; which, in the Elizabethan theatre, appears to have been a room immediately behind the stage.

6. Bottom has an important criticism to make. He clears his throat to call attention, and addresses himself in a loud voice to the stage-manager.

12. By 'r lakin, in full, 'by our ladykin' or 'little lady', is, like 'marry', an oath by the Virgin Mary. Q 1 spells it *Berlakin*; Q 2 Ff. *Berlaken*.

15. Bottom has not raised the difficulty without being prepared to solve it.

16. a **prologue**. The 'πρόλογος', 'prologue' or 'fore-word', of Greek drama, was the name given to the opening scene, in which the situation of the *dramatis personæ* was generally described by one of them. It lingered in the Elizabethan drama, not as part of the action, but as an introductory speech delivered from the stage before the actual play began. Shakespeare introduced a prologue into the interlude in *Hamlet*, Act iii. sc. 2, and uses the device himself in *Henry V.* and in *Romeo and Juliet*. But the Elizabethan prologue, unlike the Greek one, generally gave an outline of the coming plot. Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 151, "We shall know by this fellow; the players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all". Sometimes, however, it was rather of the nature of an address or apology from the actors or the poet to the audience. Ben Jonson so uses it; and that is what Bottom here proposes. An epilogue occasionally, as in *As You Like It*, served a similar purpose.

18. **more better**. Cf. note on 'worser' in ii. 1. 208.

19. **not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver**. Cf. line 47. Malone finds here a reminiscence of an event of which an account is preserved in a MS. collection of jests made by Sir Nicholas L'Estrange in Harl. MS. 6395: "There was a spectacle presented to Queen Elizabeth upon the water, and among others Harry Goldingham was to represent Arion upon the dolphin's back; but finding his voice to be very hoarse and unpleasant, when he came to perform it, he tears off his disguise, and swears he was none of Arion, not he, but even honest Harry Goldingham; which blunt discovery pleased the queen better than if it had gone through in

the right way: yet he could order his voice to an instrument exceeding well". Scott has used this incident in *Kenilworth*.

22. **eight and six**; *i.e.* alternating lines of eight and six syllables respectively, the metre of Bottom's song (lines 117-120), and the 'common metre' of the metrical psalms.

Quince appears to be the author of the interlude. He is doubtless the local poet. Bottom says in iv. 1. 209, 210, "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream".

23. Bottom's only reason for objecting to 'eight and six' is that he wants to have things his own way.

28. **a lion among ladies**. Malone finds here an obvious allusion to an event at the christening of Prince Henry of Scotland on 30th August, 1594. It is thus described in a printed description dated 1603. A triumphal car was drawn in by a blackamoor. "This chariot should have been drawn in by a lion, but because his presence might have brought some fear to the nearest, or that the sight of the lights and torches might have commoved his tameness, it was thought meet that the Moor should supply that room." It is surprising that more notice has not been taken of this allusion as helping to determine the date of our play. See Introduction, p. 10.

29. **fearful wild-fowl**, a delightfully topsy-turvy phrase.

30. **your**. Cf. i. 2. 80, note.

35. **defect**. Bottom means 'effect'.

39. **pity of my life**, a common phrase. *Of* has the sense of 'concerning', 'about'. Cf. 'desire you of more acquaintance' (line 163), and Abbott, § 174.

42. **there is two hard things**. A singular verb goes more readily with a plural subject when the verb comes first. Cf. Abbott, § 335.

48. See the note on the *Time* of the Play.

52, 53. **a bush of thorns and a lanthorn**. Cf. v. i. 248-250, note.

53. **disfigure**. Bottom means 'figure forth'.

**present**, a technical stage term for 'act'.

58. Bottom, for all his swagger, is justly looked up to as a man of considerable resources.

59. **and let**. So Collier for the *or let* of the Qq. Ff.

67-94. It is noteworthy that the passages here rehearsed do not form part of the play as presented in Act v.; and further, that the prologue actually used is not written either in 'eight and six' or 'eight and eight', but in 'ten and ten'. Again, Starveling, Snout, and Quince do not play Thisby's mother, Pyramus' father, and Thisby's father, as was arranged in Act i. sc. 1, for those characters do not appear at all. The actors assigned to them probably play Prologue, Wall, and Moonshine. One gathers that Quince revised his play between this rehearsal and the performance, though there is no mention of a second rehearsal. The inconsistency is quite easily

understood. It would be very tedious for Shakespeare's audience to go a second time over the same bit of burlesque.

67. *hempen home-spuns*. Has Shakespeare remembered the part that hemp, at one time more cultivated in England than now, plays in the traditional stories of Robin Goodfellow? See Appendix A, § 18 (a).

73. *Odorous, odorous*. The Qq. have *odours, odorous*; the Ff. *odours, odours*. I have ventured to adopt Collier's emendation. The Ff. reading makes Quince's correction as absurd as Bottom's original mistake. Cf. the "caparisons are odorous" of Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop.

74. *odours*. Bottom has not quite caught the right word even now.

78. Puck's instinct for mischief suggests to him a trick which will fit in admirably with Oberon's scheme to make Titania ridiculous.

84. *Jew*. Why *Jew*, except for the jingle with 'juvenal'? According to the legend, Pyramus and Thisbe were of Babylon, but perhaps this is near enough to Judæa for Shakespeare.

92. For some hints whence Shakespeare may have got the idea of transformation to an ass, see Appendix A, § 18 (a). In the prose *History of Dr. Faustus*, the magician puts asses' heads on the guests at a banquet. The Cl. Pr. ed. quotes a receipt for the transformation from Copland's translation of Albertus Magnus, *De Secretis Naturæ*.

This line is variously punctuated by the commentators. I think the sense is—

'If I were, fair Thisby, [if] I were only thine'.

But perhaps the punctuation of the text, which is also that of the Qq. Ff., should be retained, and Bottom be supposed to blunder over his stops, like Quince in his Prologue (v. I. 108-117).

95. On Puck's powers of transformation, &c., see Appendix A, § 16.

96. Cf. ii. I. 3-5.

98. *a fire*, in his capacity as Will o' the Wisp, or *ignis fatuus*.

105, 106. *you see an ass-head of your own, do you?* Bottom must not be supposed now, or at any time, to realize the full nature of the change that has befallen him. So far, of course, he has not realized that there has been any change at all. There is a comic irony in his allusions to asses here and in iv. I. 205, *sqq.* They have a meaning to his hearers which he does not know of. Halliwell says that Bottom is using a vernacular Elizabethan retort, and compares *Merry Wives*—

"You shall have a fool's head of your own".

Johnson very unnecessarily proposed to end Snout's speech thus: *what do I see on thee? an ass's head?*

107. translated, 'transformed': see Glossary.

108. make an ass of me. Cf. lines 105, 106, note.

112. ousel cock. An *ousel*, or *woozel*, was the ordinary name for a blackbird.

115. little quill. This refers to the shrill note of the wren, rather than to its diminutive wing-feathers.

116. Malone finds in this line a parody of the famous one of Hieronimo in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*—

"What outcry calls me from my naked bed?"

118. plain-song cuckoo. Mr. Chappell defines plain-song as song in which "the descant rested with the will of the singer", as opposed to "prick-song", i.e. "harmony written or pricked down". But is not the real point rather that plain-song is unvarying traditional melody, whereas in prick-song elaborate variations were introduced? Plain-song was a term originally applied to grave, simple ecclesiastical chants. This distinction exactly fits the difference between the monotonous note of the cuckoo, and the richly-varied music—"brave prick-song" Lyly calls it—of the nightingale. But the cuckoo's note is definitely *song*. Mr. W. W. Fowler, in his *Summer Studies of Birds and Books*, points out that this is one of the few birds, the intervals of whose voices agree with those of our artificial musical scale. Generally the cuckoo sings in a minor third. This was observed by White of Selborne, and by Browning, who speaks of—

"the word in a minor third  
There is none but the cuckoo knows".

But all cuckoos occasionally, and some of them always, prefer some other interval, such as a major third.

119. The note of the cuckoo, resembling a mocking repetition of "cuckold, cuckold", was supposed to hint to the hearer that his wife had been unfaithful to him. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 1. 908—

"The cuckoo then, on every tree,  
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,  
Cuckoo;  
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O word of fear,  
Unpleasing to a married ear".

125-127. This is the order of the lines in Q 1; Q 2 Ff., by an obvious error, place 127 before 125.

133. There is a fine ironical humour in Shakespeare's handling of the scenes between Titania and Bottom. The compliment contained in the present line is ambiguous, and the audience may take it in what way they will.

138. On Titania's description of herself, see Appendix A, § 13 (*d*), and cf. Nash's *Summer's Last Will*—

“died had I indeed unto the earth,  
But that Eliza, England's beauteous queen,  
On whom all seasons prosperously attend,  
Forbad the execution of my fate”.

No doubt Shakespeare would be willing to let Elizabeth believe herself complimented in the character of Titania.

150. **dewberries**, the fruit of the *Rubus Cæsius*, a low-growing, large-berried kind of bramble.

154. **the fiery glow-worm's eyes**. It is, of course, the tail of the glow-worm, and not its head, that is phosphorescent. Shakespeare's observation is that of the poet, rather than the naturalist. He believes the sting of the adder to lie in its tongue: cf. iii. 2. 72, and *Richard II.*, iii. 1. 20—

“a lurking adder,  
Whose double tongue may with a mortal touch  
Throw death upon the sovereign's enemies”.

But perhaps by ‘fiery eyes’ Shakespeare here means ‘eyes, or spots of light’. Cf. iii. 2. 188, ‘all yon fiery oes and eyes of light’.

160. **mercy**, *i.e.* ‘pardon’.

163. **desire you of more acquaintance**. ‘Of’ has the sense of ‘as regards’. Cf. ‘pity of my life’ (line 44), and Abbott, § 174.

164. **if I cut my finger**. Cobweb is popularly used as a styptic, to stanch blood.

167. **Squash**, an unripe peascod; cf. Glossary.

178. **a watery eye**. Cf. ii. 1. 103, note; and ii. 1. 101, note, on the moon as a patroness of *chastity*.

180. **enforced chastity**, not ‘compulsory chastity’, but ‘violated chastity’.

181. Another finely-humorous touch to finish up the scene.

**love's**. So Pope, for the *lover's* of the Qq. Ff.

## Scene 2.

This long scene deals almost entirely with the story of the lovers, taking it up where it was dropped at the end of Act ii. scene 2. There are just sufficient references to the fairy story in lines 1–34 and lines 374–377 to prevent it from passing altogether out of mind. Act i. scene 2 contained the first step in the complication of the lover story, in that, through Oberon's good-nature, and Puck's mistake, Lysander's love was turned from Hermia to Helena. The present scene contains, (1) the second step in this complication, the diversion of Demetrius' love also to Helena; (2) the crisis, in

the angry disputes of the men and maidens; (3) the beginning of the resolution, or unravelling, by the application of the antidote to Lysander's eye.

The scene is laid in another part of the wood from that in which both Act ii. sc. 2 and Act iii. sc. 1 took place.

1-40. Puck reports to Oberon his success in making Titania ridiculous, and, as he thinks, in bewitching Demetrius with Helena.

3. in extremity, to an extreme degree.

5. night-rule. This has been somewhat fantastically regarded as a corruption of 'night-revel'; but it does not seem to mean anything but 'order kept by night'. Halliwell quotes from the statutes of London, as given in Stow's *Survey*, "No man shall, after the hour of nine at the night, keep any rule whereby any such sudden outcry be made in the still of the night, as making any affray". Cf. also *Twelfth Night*, ii. 3. 132, "Mistress Mary, if you prized my lady's favour at anything more than contempt, you would not give means for this uncivil rule".

13. thick-skin. Hamner needlessly read *thick-skull*. Cf. Philemon Holland, *Pliny*, i. 346, "Some measure not the fineness of spirit and wit by the purity of blood, but suppose that creatures are brutish, more or less, according as their skin is thicker or thinner".

sort, company. See Glossary, s.v.

19. mimic. In the sense of 'actor'. Q 1 has *minnick*, Q 2 *minnock*, F 1 *mimmick*. Ebsworth argues in favour of *minnick* in the sense of *minnikin*, effeminate. It would be used ironically of Bottom, 'my dainty fellow'. Ritson proposed *mammock*, 'a huge misshapen thing'.

21. russet-pated choughs, jackdaws with russet or ashen-gray heads. Mr. Bennett (*Zool. Journal*, v. 496), taking 'russet' as 'red', proposed *russet-patted*, as referring to the red legs of the Cornish chough. See Glossary, s.v. *Russet*.

25. at our stamp. The fairies, as elemental beings, have the power of shaking the earth. Cf. Appendix A, § 13 (d), and iv. 1. 82, 83, where Oberon says—

"Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,  
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be".

Cf. the 'hemton hamten' passage quoted from Scot in Appendix A, § 18 (a), which here, as in iii. 1. 79, may have stuck in Shakespeare's memory. Johnson, however, proposed to read *at a stump*, and illustrated it from Drayton's *Nymphidia*—

"A stump doth trip him in his pace.  
Down fell poor Hob upon his face".

32. sweet. Often used contemptuously by Shakespeare. See Glossary.

41-87. Hermia discovered the absence of Lysander at the close of Act ii. scene 2. In seeking for him she falls in with Demetrius. He woos, and she responds with questions as to Lysander. In the end she goes, and Demetrius lies down to sleep.

45. *should, ought to.*

49. The broken line may be explained by the change of subject. Hermia is lost for a moment in contemplation of the virtues of Lysander, before she begins again in a slightly different direction.

54. *displease.* So Qq. Ff. Some editors accept Hanmer's quite unnecessary *disease*.

55. *Her brother's.* The classical moon-goddess, Phœbe, was sister of the sun-god, Phoebus or Apollo.

the Antipodes, that is, properly, not the opposite hemisphere itself, but the dwellers there, whose feet are over against ours. Cf. *Rich. II.*, iii. 2. 47, where Richard compares himself to the sun—

“this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke,  
Who all this while hath revell'd in the night  
Whilst we were wandering with the Antipodes”.

57. *dead, deadly.* See Glossary. The double sense of the word gives Demetrius his opportunity for a retort.

72. *doubler tongue.* Here again Shakespeare's natural history is at fault. Cf. iii. 1. 154, note. But of course the adder's *double tongue* is symbolical of the doubleness of treachery.

74. *a misprised mood*, a mood caused by misprision, or mistake.

80. Pope added *so*, which is omitted in the Qq. Ff.

87. *his tender*, *i.e.* ‘sleep's tender’.

88-176. Oberon gathers from what he has overheard that it is not Demetrius whose eyes have been enchanted. He resolves to repair the error, sends Puck for Hermia, and in the meantime himself anoints Demetrius' eyes. Helena enters, still wooed by Lysander, who had followed her at the end of Act ii. scene 2. Demetrius wakes, and he too, as soon as his eyes fall upon Helena, begins to woo her. So that now the fairies have brought about a double faithlessness, and both of Hermia's former lovers have left her for Helena.

92, 93. Puck glances at the central idea of the play. Whatever we may do, fate will have it so that most men are false and changeable in love.

97. *sighs ... that cost the fresh blood dear.* Cf. *a Hen. VI.*, iii. 2. 60-63—

“Might liquid tears or heart-offending groans  
Or blood-consuming sighs recall his life,  
I would be blind with weeping, sick with groans,  
Look pale as primrose with blood-drinking sighs”.

97. *costs*. Ff. read *costs*, another instance of a singular verb after a plural subject. Cf. ii. 1. 91, note.

101. Douce quotes Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. x., "Swift as arrow from a Turkye bow". Cf. also Drayton's *Nymphidia*—

"And through the air away doth go,  
Swift as an arrow from the bow".

And Chaucer, *Marchant's Tale*, 428—

"Than shal your soule up to hevene skippe,  
Swifter than dooth an arwe out of the bowe".

113. *a lover's fee*. Halliwell explains this as meaning proverbially three kisses. He quotes an old ballad—

"How many? says Batt;  
Why, three, says Matt,  
For that's a maiden's fee".

119. *alone*, that is, 'unequaled'. Cf. *Ant. and Cleo.*, iv. 6. 30—

"I am alone the villain of the earth".

120, 121. It is the essence of Puck to delight in mischief. See Appendix A, § 16.

129. *truth kills truth*. 'If Lysander's present vows to Helena are true, then he must have been perjured to Hermia.'

136. Lysander's confident assertion of Demetrius' love for Hermia leads up dramatically to the latter's declaration to Helena.

137-144. These lines are amusingly reminiscent of the traditional hyperboles in which Elizabethan sonnetteers celebrated the charms of their mistresses.

144. *princess of pure white*. There does not seem to be any difficulty in this phrase as applied to a lady's hand, but Hammer thought it necessary to read *pureness*, and Collier *impress*.

150. *join in souls*, 'agree together'. Helena thinks throughout the scene that the two men have conspired with Hermia to mock her. Against this ungenerous conduct she makes a very proper and spirited protest. Here, too, the commentators have boggled, for *in souls* reading *in flouts*, *insolents*, *ill souls*, *in sport*, *in sooth*, *in shoals* (!), &c. &c.

160. *extort*, wrest away.

177-344. Hermia, still pursuing Lysander, enters to complete the situation, and in the humorous absurdities of the passage that follows, the lover story reaches its crisis. Helena still thinks she is flouted, and that Hermia is in the plot; finding Hermia to be downright angry, she gets frightened, and would gladly escape to Athens. Lysander and Demetrius end by going off to fight for Helena. Hermia at first believes that Lysander is only scorning Helena; when she



realizes that she has lost her lover, she flies into a passion, and wishes to do her rival an injury. There is more differentiation of character here than elsewhere in the story, between Hermia, the diminutive shrew, and Helena, the long-legged coward.

177. *his*. This is the usual form in Elizabethan as in Middle English for the possessive of the neuter as well as of the masculine pronoun. 'Its' was just coming into use in Shakespeare's time. It is common in Florio's Montaigne, but is never found in the 1611 version of the Bible. Both Shakespeare and Milton avoid as far as possible the necessity for using either form. But where it cannot be helped, Milton always uses *its*, while Shakespeare prefers *his*. *Its* only appears six times in the early editions of his plays, and all of these are in F 1. The Q 1 of *King Lear*, iv. 2. 32, has *ith*, which is probably a misprint for the uninflected pronoun *it*, which was used as a possessive in the Midland dialect. This is found several times in Shakespeare. See Sweet, *Short English Grammar*, § 399; Abbott, § 228; and G. L. Craik, *English of Shakespeare*, pp. 91-97.

188. *oes and eyes of light*. There is probably a pun here. Shakespeare elsewhere uses O for a circle. In *Hen. V.*, Prol. 13, he calls the theatre a "wooden O"; and in *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2. 81, speaks of "this little O, the earth". Cf. also Bacon, *Essay* 37, "And *oes* or *spangs*, as they are of no great cost, so they are of most glory".

201. *O, is all forgot?* So Qq. Ff. Many editors adopt Spalding's conjecture, *O, is it all forgot*: but the *O* really represents a sob, and is metrically equivalent to two syllables. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 14.

203-214. Marshall quotes a somewhat similar description of girl-friendship from *Two Noble Kinsmen*, Act i. sc. 3.

203. *artificial gods*, that is, I suppose, gods whose creative power works in the sphere of art, not nature. Shakespeare expresses almost any relation between two ideas by making one of them adjectival to the other.

204. *needles*, a monosyllable. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 7.

213, 214. Theobald suggested *first, like*, for the *first life* of the Qq. Ff.

Douce explains the passage thus: "Helen says, 'we had two seeming bodies, but only one heart'. She then exemplifies her position by a simile—'we had two of the first,' i.e. *bodies*, like the double coats in heraldry, that belong to man and wife as *one person*, but which, like our *single heart*, have but one *crest*.'" But heraldically of the *first* signifies the repetition of identical quarterings more than once in the same shield. Helena likens Hermia and herself to such quarterings, and as they are due but to one bearer, and are surmounted with his single crest, so she and her friend had but a single heart.

220. *passionate*. F1 inserts this word, accidentally omitted in the Qq.

237. *perséver* is regularly so accented in Shakespeare. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 7, 10 N.B. i.

242. argument, subject of jest.

250. prayers. So Theobald for the *praise* of the Qq. Ff.

256. It begins to dawn upon Hermia that Lysander is in earnest.

257. *Ethiope*. Cf. line 263, "out, tawny Tartar". I suppose that Hermia is intended to be a dark beauty and Helena a fair one. Brunettes were out of fashion in the reign of the blonde Elizabeth.

257, 258. The Qq. have—

*Dem.*                      *no, no; he'll*  
                              *Seem to break loose,*

and the Ff.—

*Dem.*                      *No, no, Sir,*  
                              *Seem to break loose.*

The arrangement of the text, which I have adopted, was suggested by Mr. G. Joicey in *Notes and Queries*, 8th series, iii. 102. Mr. Joicey, however, gives the first half-line to Helena. But it is Hermia who has flung her arms round Lysander, and is holding him back from fighting. The Cambridge editors give the whole to Demetrius, supposing him to begin his taunt impersonally, "No, no, he'll" [not fight]; and then, breaking off, to address Lysander directly.

260. *thou cat, thou burr*. The point is in the way Hermia is clinging to him.

265. Helena still thinks that both Lysander and Hermia are playing a pre-arranged comedy.

275. *Since night*, i.e. 'since night fell'; it is still the same night.

282. *juggler*, a trisyllable. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 8 (iii).

*canker-blossom*. This may mean either (1) a 'worm i' the bud', a noxious grub, which spoils the flowers, as Helena has spoilt Lysander's love for Hermia. This is the usual meaning of the word 'canker'. So in ii. 2. 3 Titania bids her elves "kill cankers in the musk-rose buds"; or it may be (2) the blossom of the dog-rose, *Rosa canina*, which was sometimes called the Canker-rose. Cf. Sonnet 54—

"The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye  
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,  
Hang on such thorns and play as wantonly  
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:  
But, for their virtue only is their show,  
They live unwoo'd and unrespected fade,  
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made."

'Canker' sometimes has this sense; cf. *1 Henry IV.*, i. 3. 175—

"To put down Richard, that sweet, lovely rose,  
And plant this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke";

and *Much Ado*, i. 3. 27—

“I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace”.

If this is the meaning of ‘canker-blossom’ here, Hermia’s point will be that Helena has juggled herself into Lysander’s affections, and is as poor a substitute for her rival, as the canker-blossom is for the garden rose.

288. you counterfeit, you puppet, ‘you doll that dost ape humanity’.

292. Scan

“And with | her per’ | sönage, her | tall’ per’ | sönage”,

and note the same word pronounced as a dissyllable and a trisyllable in the same line. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 8 (ii) *b*.

296. thou painted maypole. Stubbes, in his *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), describes the Maypole as “some tyme painted with variable colours”. The dark Hermia is jeering at her rival’s pink-and-white cheeks.

329. hindering knot-grass. The knot-grass is *Polygonum aviculare*, a low-growing herb of the Buckwheat family. It is probably called ‘hindering’, because it was supposed to stunt the growth of children. Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, “Should they put him into a straight pair of gaskins, ’twere worse than knot-grass, he would never grow after it”; and *The Coxcomb*, “We want a boy extremely for this function, kept under, for a year, with milk and knot-grass”. But the ‘knot-grass’ also ‘hinders’ the plough, and is called in the north the Deil’s-lings; just as another plant is, for the same reason, known as Rest-harrow. Milton must have intended by

“the savoury herb

Of knot-grass dew-besprent”,

on which the flocks feed in *Comus*, some kind of pasture grass. But then Milton knew nothing of natural history.

338. The duel between Lysander and Demetrius for Hermia may be suggested by that between Palemon and Arcite for Emilia in the *Knights Tale*.

344. This line is accidentally omitted in F1, which gives no *Exit* for Helena or Hermia.

344-400. This episode begins the unravelling of the lover story. The humorous confusion is to continue a little longer, and then Lysander is to be restored to his love for Hermia, while Demetrius is to retain his for Helena. Oberon also prepares for the similar unravelling of the fairy story.

347. king of shadows. On this description of Oberon, see Appendix A, § 13 (*h*).

349. Cf. ii. i. 263.

351. 'nointed. For the omission of the initial syllable, see Essay on Metre, § 8 (iv).

355. On the power of the fairies to overcast the night, see Appendix A, § 13 (d). The scene irresistibly reminds one of the battle between Tweedledum and Tweedledee in *Through the Looking-glass*, and the characters of those heroes are about as much differentiated as those of Lysander and Demetrius.

365. With leaden legs and batty wings, a description which suggests both the heaviness and the darkness of sleep.

366. this herb, the antidote referred to in ii. 1. 184. It is afterwards called 'Dian's bud': cf. iv. 1. 70, note.

367. virtuous here combines the two senses of 'efficacious' and 'beneficent'. See Glossary.

373. Here, as in Theseus, Shakespeare keeps in mind the difference between the vagaries of love in its early stages, and the assurance of confirmed love.

379. night's swift dragons. Cf. *Cymbeline*, ii. 2. 48, "Swift, swift, you dragons of the night"; and Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 59, "While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke".

380. Aurora's harbinger, Venus Phosphor, the morning-star. Cf. Milton, *May Morning*, 1, "Now the bright morning-star, day's harbinger".

381-387. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 1. 149—

"I have heard,  
• The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,  
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat  
Awake the god of day; and at his warning,  
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,  
The extravagant and erring spirit hies  
To his confine";

and Milton, *Ode on the Nativity*, 232—

"The flocking shadows pale  
Troop to the infernal jail;  
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave;  
And the yellow-skirted fays  
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze".

383. crossways and floods. Suicides, whose bodies were either never recovered from the water, or else buried in crossways without religious rites, were looked upon as especially doomed to wander.

384. their wormy beds. Cf. Milton, *On the Death of a Fair Infant*—

"Thy beauties lie in wormy bed",

and Charles Lamb, *Hester*—

"Yet cannot I by force be led  
To think upon the wormy bed  
And her together".

388. spirits of another sort, *i.e.* not mere ghosts. On the nocturnal habits of the fairies, see Appendix A, § 13 (*h*).

389. I take this line to mean that Oberon has dallied with the Morning; but some critics explain it as meaning that he has 'made sport' or 'hunted' with 'the Morning's love', that is, Tithonus, the husband, or Cephalus, the lover, according to Greek myth, of Aurora.

391. the eastern gate. Cf. Milton, *L'Allegro*, 59—

"Right against the eastern gate,  
Where the great sun begins his state".

392. Cf. Sonnet 33, "gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy".

401-463. Puck leads Demetrius and Lysander in turn astray by counterfeiting to each the voice of the other. At last the two men and the two maids come separately to the same spot, and, over-wearied, lie down to sleep. Puck then applies the antidote to Lysander's eye, that on awaking he may return to his first love, and leave Helena for Demetrius.

415. The Ff. have here the stage-direction, *Shifting places*. Perhaps it belongs really to line 413, and signifies that Lysander comes in as Demetrius goes out. Demetrius accuses Lysander in line 423 of 'shifting every place'.

418. The Ff. have the stage-direction, *Lye down*.

421. Ho, ho, ho! Robin Goodfellow inherited this laugh from the devil of the mysteries and moralities, who traditionally entered with it. In the prose *Life of Robin Goodfellow* the account of each of Robin's tricks ends with: "And Robin went away laughing *ho, ho, hoh*".

451. To your eye. So Rowe, for the *your eye* of the Qq. Ff.

461. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 2. 884—

"Our wooing doth not end like an old play;  
Jack hath not Jill".

The proverb, "All shall be well, and Jack shall have Jill", is found in Heywood's *Epigrams upon Proverbs* (1562), in Skelton's *Magnyfycence*, and elsewhere.

463. Another old proverb: cf. Ray's *English Proverbs*, "All is well, and the man hath his mare again". F 1 closes with the stage-direction, *They sleep all the Act; that is*, through Act iv. up to iv. 1. 135.

### Act IV.—Scene I.

The whole of this short Act is concerned with the resolution or disentanglement of the three stories which came to a crisis in the last. Lines 1-42 of the first scene again put before us the contrast between Titania and Bottom, thus connecting the motive of this

scene with that of Act iii. sc. 1. In lines 43-99, the charm is taken off Titania's sight and she is reconciled to Oberon. In lines 100-196, a similar reconciliation comes about between the human lovers; while in lines 197-213, Bottom is restored to his normal aspect without any loss of self-satisfaction.

1-42. The contrast between Bottom's coarse tastes, and the dainty delights which Titania proffers to him, is humorously touched. The point is emphasized by making Titania speak in blank verse, and Bottom in prose. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 19.

2. *amiable*. Literally 'lovable'; here used rather of physical than mental qualities: cf. Glossary.

3. *musk-roses*. Cf. ii. 1. 252, note.

12, 13. *the honey-bag*. Marshall quotes from Kirkby and Spence's *Entomology*, "The honey is conveyed through the oesophagus into the first stomach, which we call the honey-bag, and which, from being very small, is swelled when full of it to a considerable size".

19. *leave your courtesies*, 'do not wait for elaborate compliment', 'put on your hat'. Mustard-seed is bowing and scraping before Bottom. Cf. the scene between Hamlet and Osric in *Hamlet*, v. 2. 82, *sqq.* Bottom is adapting himself to the manners of courts.

21, 22. *Cavalery Cobweb*. It was Pease-blossom who was to scratch (line 7), and Cobweb was sent after a honey-bag (line 10); but the alliteration of *Cavalery Cobweb*, parallel to that of 'Monsieur Mustardseed', makes it probable that the slip was Shakespeare's.

27. *the tongs and the bones*. The 'tongs' appear to have been a rustic instrument, like a triangle, played with a key; the 'bones' are unfortunately familiar. The Ff. here have the stage-direction *Musicke Tongs, Rurall Musicke*.

30. *a bottle of hay*; not, as is generally said, a 'truss' of hay, but a smaller quantity, doubtless the same measure as a 'pottle' of strawberries. Halliwell quotes a statement from a court-book of 1551, that the halfpenny bottle of hay weighed 2½ pounds, and the penny bottle 5 pounds. The term survives in the proverbial phrase 'to look for a needle in a bottle of hay'.

31. *good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow*. This passage seems to have suggested the bit in *Through the Looking-glass*, where the White King observes, "There's nothing like hay"; and on being pressed, explains, "I did n't say there was nothing better than hay, I said there was nothing like it".

32, 33. These lines as arranged in the Qq. Ff. do not scan. Pope treated them as prose, but Titania does not speak prose elsewhere in the scene. The arrangement in the text is Hanmer's, who, however, read *fetch thee thence* for the sake of the metre. But probably *hoard* should be scanned as a dissyllable: cf. Essay on Metre, § 8 (viii).

36. *exposition*. Bottom seems to mean 'disposition'.

38. all ways; *i.e.* in all directions. This is Theobald's conjecture for the *alwaies* of the Qq. Ff.

39-41. So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist; the female ivy so  
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.

The punctuation here adopted implies that the woodbine and the honeysuckle are two different plants, which twine together; but the Qq. Ff. have—

*So doth the woodbine, the sweet honeysuckle,  
Gently entwist;*

If this is right, only one plant is spoken of, and 'entwist' must either govern 'the elm', or must be taken in the neuter sense of 'twists itself together'. Now in *Much Ado about Nothing*, iii. 1.

7—

"the pleached bower,  
Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,  
Forbid the sun to enter",

is clearly the same as 'the woodbine coverture' of line 30 of the same scene. In our own play, the heavy scent of the honeysuckle gives the natural interpretation of '*luscious woodbine*' in ii. 1. 251; while in the most authoritative botanical books of the 16th century, the *Herbals* of Turner (1568), Lyte (1578), and Gerard (1597), the two names are always treated as synonymous. But then Shakespeare was not a botanist; the local names of plants vary considerably, and it is easy to show that many other climbers besides the honeysuckle were actually known as woodbine. Thus Taylor, the water-poet, distinguishes

"The woodbine, primrose, and the cowslip fine,  
The honisuckle and the daffadil".

And the parallelism of the present passage makes it clear to my mind that two plants are meant, just as the ivy and the elm are two, and Titania and Bottom are two. A point is lost if Bottom is not compared to the 'sweet honeysuckle'. What plant, then, is here intended by the woodbine? Possibly the *Convolvulus sepium*, the great white bindweed or withywind. This is apparently the meaning of the name in Linacre's *Herball*, and we may compare Jonson's picture of a garden species of *Convolvulus* in *The Vision of Delight* (1617)—

"Behold!  
How the blue bindweed doth itself infold  
With honeysuckle".

And possibly the *Clematis Vitalba*, or traveller's-joy, which is called *wooden-binde* in an 11th-century Anglo-Saxon vocabulary (cf. Ellacombe, *Plant-lore of Shakespeare*). An ingeniously improbable

solution of the difficulty is given by Warburton's conjectural reading—

"So doth the woodbine, the sweet honeysuckle,  
Gently entwist the maple; ivy so  
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm".

40. **female ivy.** Shakespeare transfers to the ivy the classical notion of the vine as the wife of the husband elm which supports it. Cf. *Comedy of Errors*, ii. 2. 176—

"Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,  
Whose weakness married to thy stronger state,  
Makes me with thy strength to communicate".

46. **favours, 'love-tokens'.** So Q 1 : Q 2 F 1 have *savours*.

51. Cf. ii. 1. 14, 15.

66. **a dream.** Cf. Introduction, p. 23.

70. **Dian's bud**, the herb already spoken of in ii. 1. 184 and iii. 2. 366. The flower intended may be the *Agnus castus*, of which the old herbals say that it "wyll keep man and woman chaste". Cf. *The Flower and the Leaf*, lines 473-476—

"That is Diane, goddess of chastite,  
And for because that she a maiden is,  
In her hond the braunch she beareth this,  
That *agnus castus* men call properly".

Or it may be, and perhaps this is more likely, the rose, the proper flower of Elizabeth, who loved to be called Cynthia or Diana.

**o'er.** So Thirlby for the *or* of the Qq. Ff.

**Cupid's flower**, the love-in-idleness or pansy, already used on Titania in ii. 2. 27. The connection with Cupid is explained in ii. 1. 155, *sqq.*

79. **these five**, the four Athenian lovers and Bottom. The *five* of the text is Thirlby's emendation for the *fine* of the Qq. Ff.

83. **rock the ground.** On the power of the fairies to do this, see Appendix A, § 13 (*d*).

86. The plot is all but unravelled, and we begin to look forward to the final winding-up.

87. **prosperity.** So Q 1 : Q 2 Ff. have *posterity*.

93. **nightës.** Here, as in ii. 1. 7, the metre seems to require the old inflected genitive form. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 8 (i) *b*.

100. Theseus and his train enter, and bring us a step nearer to the conclusion.

**forester.** The Elizabethan forester was rather a huntsman than a woodcutter.

101. **our observation**, *i.e.* of the 'rite of May'. Cf. line 109.

104. An Alexandrine line. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 15.



109. Cadmus, the mythical founder of Thebes, not elsewhere mentioned by Shakespeare.

110. the bear. Theobald quite needlessly conjectured *the boar*.

111. Shakespeare might have learnt from Ovid in what esteem the Spartan breed of hound was held in classical Greece.

116-124. Theseus, the practical man, the man of his hands, takes more delight in the sport of hunting, than in intellectual pursuits. He is a noted huntsman already in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. The description of the hounds is an example of Shakespeare's own skill in woodcraft. Cf. the description of the points of a horse in *Venus and Adonis*, lines 295-300.

121. Each under each, that is, some higher, some lower in note, like a chime of bells. The Elizabethan huntsman made much of the musical cry of his pack. Cf. Markham's *Country Contentments*: "If you would have your kennell for sweetnesse of cry, then you must compound it of some large dogges, that have deepe solemne mouthes, and are swift in spending, which must, as it were, beare the base in the consort, then a double number of roaring, and loud ringing mouthes, which must beare the counter-tenour, then some hollow, plaine, sweete mouthes, which must beare the meane or middle part; and soe with these three parts of musicke you shall make your cry perfect". Even Addison's "very parfit gentil knight" returned a present of a hound by a servant "with a great many expressions of civility, but desired him to tell his Master that the dog he had sent was indeed a most excellent *Bass*, but that at present he only wanted a *Counter-Tenor*".

137. For the idea that wood-birds begin to couple on St. Valentine's Day, cf. Donne, *Epithalamion on the Lady Elizabeth*, 5-8—

"Thou marriest every year  
The lyric lark, and the grave whispering dove,  
The sparrow that neglects his life for love,  
The household bird with the red stomacher".

157-173. Demetrius' fancy for Hermia is no less a freak of love, a bit of love's lawlessness, than that of Lysander for Helena, although we do not see it brought about by visible enchantment.

163. I doubt if this line can be scanned without emendation. Abbott (§ 486) makes a trisyllable of *Melted*, thus—

"Me-el' | ted as | the snow', | seems' to | me now'".

Cf. Essay on Metre, § 14.

170. a sickness. So Qq. Ff.; most editors accept Farmer's conjecture of *in sickness*. The grammatical apposition is somewhat loose, between 'a sickness' and the substantive idea contained in 'did I loathe this food'.

179. for, used in the sense of 'for that', 'since', or 'because', to introduce a subordinate sentence; cf. Abbott, § 151.

181. **three and three**, three men and three maids.

183. Cf. i. i. 122, note.

186. **parted eye**, that is, with the two eyes not in focus, and so seeing the object separately.

189. **Mine own**, and **not mine own**, like a jewel picked up in the road, which the rightful owner may claim at any moment. Warburton's emendation, *like a gemell*, i.e. 'twin', is ingenious, but improbable.

189, 190. **Are you sure that we are awake?** So the Qq.: the Ff. omit this sentence, which certainly makes both lines difficult to scan: cf. Essay on Metre, § 15.

197-213. Bottom awakes and regards all that has happened since his transformation as a dream. But that he has been an ass he has no notion, only that he has been adored by a most fair lady. Hence the irony of his situation. He would say in lines 203-205, 'Methought I was a gallant lover, and methought I had a garland on my head'; the audience know that it should be, 'Methought I was—an ass, and methought I had—an ass's nole on'.

200. **God's my life**. As in so many oaths, there is some ellipse here: perhaps the full phrase is, 'God's blessing on my life'. Sometimes it is still further corrupted, as in *As You Like It*, iii. 5. 43, "'Od's my little life".

202. **an ass**. Cf. iii. i. 105, note.

205. **a patched fool**. The traditional garb of the professional jester or court fool was a patched, parti-coloured, or motley coat.

206-209. **eye...heard, ...ear...seen, &c.** An absurd inversion, belonging to the same type of humour as Bottom's characteristic misuse of words. There is a clear reference to *1 Corinthians*, ii. 9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him".

210, 211. **Bottom's dream...because it hath no bottom**. Mr. Fleay suggests that there is here a hit at Robert Greene, who called one of his poems *A Maiden's Dream*, for the apparent reason that there was no maiden in it.

213. **at her death**, that is, 'at Thisbe's death', as an epilogue. Theobald's *after death*, that is, after his death as Pyramus on the stage, is ingenious, and commends itself to many editors. But has not Bottom confused the incidents of his dream with those of the play, and identified Titania with Thisbe?

## Scene 2.

Bottom is restored to his fellows, and so the fairy story, the lover story, and the rustic story are all alike happily resolved. This scene leads on to the Fifth Act, which is all concerned with the play

within the play, and serves as an epilogue to the main action. The stage-direction is, in the Qq., *Enter Quince, Flute, Thisby, and the rabble*; in the Ff., *Enter Quince, Flute, Thisbe, Snout, and Starveling*. But of course Thisby is Flute. The second speech is given to Flute in the Qq. and Starveling in the Ff. The speeches given to Flute in the text are given to Thisby in both Qq. and Ff.

7. Bottom has succeeded in persuading the rest of the company to take him at his own valuation.

9, 10. **any handicraft man in Athens**, which is much the same in the speaker's mind as, 'any man in the world'.

14. **a thing of naught**. Cf. *Hamlet*, iv. 2. 30—

*Ham.*

"The king is a thing—

*Guild.* A thing, my lord!

*Ham.*

Of nothing".

18, 19. **sixpence a day**. It is suggested by Steevens that there is here another satirical hit at Thomas Preston (cf. i. 2. 9-11, note), who received from Elizabeth a pension of £20 a year, or about a shilling a day, for his performance before her in the play of *Dido* at King's College, Cambridge, in 1564.

24. **courageous**. I suppose Quince means 'encouraging'.

27. **no true Athenian**. Cf. *Acts*, xvii. 21, "For all the Athenians, and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing". Bottom's anxiety at once to tell his tale and to keep up the mystery of it, is very humorous.

34. **our play is preferred**. If preferred here means 'chosen for performance', as the context and Bottom's excitement seem to indicate, there is a slight inconsistency, for the play is not definitely chosen until v. 1. 81. Perhaps it means 'proffered', as in the phrase 'to prefer a request'.

39. **No more words**. No one has had much chance of any words but Bottom himself.

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## Act V.

This Act is a kind of epilogue to the whole play. The principal actions are finished, but the presentment by the rustics of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe gives an opportunity for a burlesque treatment of the central theme. Here, too, young love, and the disobedience to parents which it provokes, are the cause of the calamity. Thus the Act bears the same relation to the rest of the play as the antimasque, the dance of clowns or satyrs, bears to the masque proper. It also serves Shakespeare to introduce certain criticisms on

poetry and the drama, as they appear to Theseus, and to that side of Shakespeare which Theseus represents.

The closing lines (lines 378-424) are of the nature of an epithalamion, or wedding-song, and doubtless have a particular reference to the occasion on which the play was first performed. See Introduction, p. 13.

2-22. Theseus is the practical man, more impressed with the unrealities of imagination than with its realities, and therefore, in this case at least, judging with an undue scepticism of the supernatural. Contrast the attitude of the unpractical, speculative Hamlet (*Hamlet*, i. 5. 166)—

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy”.

And, in a sense, Shakespeare himself thinks with Theseus, for the fairy action is to him a dream, not true, though symbolical of truth.

4. In the mind of Theseus, his own deep but sane affection for Hippolyta is a thing apart from such passions and absurdities of youthful lovers as this play treats of.

seething brains. Cf. *Winter's Tale*, iii. 3. 64, “Would any but boiled brains of two-and-twenty hunt this weather?” and *Macbeth*, ii. 1. 38—

“A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain”.

9. sees more devils. Chalmers found in this passage an allusion to Lodge's *Wit's Miserie and the World's Madnesse: discovering the incarnate devils of this age* (1596). But this is the emptiest of empty critical theories.

11. Helen's beauty. Helen of Troy became the type of beauty to the Elizabethans, from the time of her glorification in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

a brow of Egypt, the dark features of an Egyptian, or gipsy. Darkness was a blemish in the age which adored the blonde Elizabeth.

12, 13. Cf. Drayton's description of Marlowe in the *Epistle to Reynolds*—

“that fine madness still he did retain,  
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain”.

19, 20. ‘The mere idea of a joy is enough incentive to a strong imagination to conjure up and believe in the actual presence of something which causes that joy.’

21, 22. These lines are rather bald after what they follow. If the scene has been rewritten (cf. Introduction, p. 14), perhaps we have here a survival from the earlier version.

26. *i.e.* holds together so *constantly*, or *consistently*, as almost to compel belief.

34. **after-supper**, not a separate meal from supper, but the last course of it, the *re-re-supper* or dessert.

37. a **torturing hour**. Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ii. 90—

“The vassals of his anger, when the scourge  
Inexorably, and the torturing hour,  
Calls us to penance”.

38. Philostrate fills the position of Master of the Revels at Theseus' court. In the Ff. Egeus takes the place of Philostrate in this scene. Perhaps the part of Philostrate was omitted to save an actor.

39. **abridgement**, something to cut the hours short, a pastime. Hamlet uses the word in a rather different sense, when he says of the players in ii. 2. 439, “Look, where my abridgment comes”. He means that they are, as he calls them in ii. 2. 548, “the abstract and brief chronicles of the time”.

42. **ripe**. So Q 1; F 1 has *rife*.

43. According to the Ff. Lysander reads the brief, and Theseus comments on it; and probably this represents the later stage-practice. The Qq. make Theseus both read and comment.

44. Hercules was attacked by the Centaurs and vanquished them, when he was pursuing the Erymanthian boar. Theseus himself was present, according to Plutarch, at the still more famous battle between the Centaurs and the Lapithæ, and doubtless it is to this that he now refers. Cf. Appendix D.

48. The story of Orpheus and his death at the hands of the Thracian Bacchanals is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. xi. Cf. Milton, *Lycidas*, 58-62—

“What could the muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
The muse herself, for her enchanting son,  
When by the rout that made the hideous roar  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore”.

51. **Thebes**. The conquest of Thebes by Theseus is told of in Chaucer's *Knights Tale*. See also the passage quoted from Plutarch in Appendix D.

52. **The thrice three Muses**. On the probable allusion here, see Introduction, p. 9.

56-60. On the Oxymoron in these lines, see i. 2. 9-11, note.

59. **wondrous strange snow**. Scan *wondrous* as a trisyllable, *wonderous* (Essay on Metre, § 8 (iii) b). Innumerable emendations have been suggested, in order to replace *strange snow* by an antithesis corresponding to *hot ice*, &c. Among them are *scorching snow* (Hammer), *strange black snow* (Upton), *seething snow* (Collier), *orange snow* (Bailey), *sooty snow* (Herr), *swart snow* (Kinnear), and *wondrous strange jet snow* (Perring). But ‘strange’ means ‘contrary to

nature', and therefore 'wondrous strange' sufficiently indicates the point of Theseus' criticism.

80. stretch'd, *i.e.* 'strained'.

82, 83. Cf. Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, v. 3. of a masque-

"Nothing which duty, and desire to please,  
Bears written in the forehead, comes amiss".

85. Hippolyta protests against seeing the play merely to mock it. Theseus suggests another view. 'We shall take what they mistake, find our amusement in their blunders; but at the same time we shall appreciate the spirit in which the play is proffered.' In Theseus, as in Henry V., Shakespeare finds that sympathy with the mass of his subjects which makes him fit to be their king.

91, 92. noble respect Takes it in might, not merit. 'If you regard it as a noble mind should, you will judge it as it might have been, as it was intended, not as it actually deserves.'

93, 94. great clerks. This seems to be an allusion to the elaborate addresses made during the progresses of Elizabeth at the gates of every town she entered, and in particular whenever she visited Oxford or Cambridge. At Warwick, which Elizabeth visited in 1572, when the Recorder had welcomed her, she replied, "Come hither, little Recorder. It was told me you would be afraid to look upon me, or to speak boldly; but you were not so afraid of me, as I was of you; and I now thank you for putting me in mind of my duty, and that should be in me" (Nicholls, *Progresses of Elizabeth*, i. 315). Cf. also *Pericles*, v. prol. 5, "Deep clerks she dumbs".

96. periods, full stops, as in the Prologue that follows.

106. the Prologue. This served a double purpose in Elizabethan drama. Sometimes it took the form of an apology for the shortcomings of the performance; sometimes it indicated the course of the plot. Here, as in the choruses which serve as prologues to the several Acts of *Henry V.*, both uses are combined.

108. On the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, see Introduction, p. 17 and Appendix E. The play may be taken as a burlesque of such an interlude as a pedantic schoolmaster might write for a rustic performance, and perhaps more generally of the type of tragedy in vogue before Marlowe. The rhyme, occasionally defective, the incorrect classical allusions, the wealth of ejaculation, the palpable devices to fill up the metre, the abuse of alliteration, and the inevitable bathos, are all characteristic of the primitive kind of drama of which Richard Edwards' *Damon and Pythias* is an example. Similar burlesques may be found in the *Masque of the Worthies* in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and in the declamation and performance of the strolling players in *Hamlet*, Act ii. sc. 2, and Act iii. sc. 2. Cf. also the account of *Narcissus* in Appendix F.

107. *Flourish of trumpets*. This signified that the play was about to begin. Cf. Decker, *The Gull's Horn-book* (1609), "Present

not yourself on the stage (especially at a new play) until the quaking prologue hath (by rubbing) got colour in his cheeks, and is ready to give the trumpets their cue that he's upon point to enter".

The mispunctuation of the prologue is ingeniously contrived to pervert the sense. Rightly punctuated it would read thus—

"If we offend, it is with our good will  
That you should think we come not to offend,  
But with good will to show our simple skill:  
That is the true beginning of our end.  
Consider then; we come; but in despite  
We do not come. As minding to content you,  
Our true intent is all for your delight.  
We are not here that you should here repent you.  
The actors are at hand; and by their show  
You shall know all that you are like to know."

A similar use of mispunctuation is found in Nicholas Udall's play of *Roister-Doister* (1566).

**118. stand upon points.** This has the twofold sense of (1) mind his stops, and (2) trouble about niceties.

**123. a recorder,** a flute with a hole bored in the side and covered with gold-beater's skin, so as to approach the effect of the human voice. See Chappell, *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, p. 246.

**not in government,** not produced with musical skill. Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 372, "Govern these ventages with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music".

**125.** The Ff. here add the stage-direction, *Tawyer with a trumpet (i.e. with a trumpeter) before them.* This is by itself almost enough to show that F I was printed from a theatre-manuscript of the play. Tawyer or Tawier was no doubt the actor who played the part of Quince. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps found the entry of his burial in the sexton's note-book at St. Saviour's, Southwark as "William Tawier, Mr. Heminges man". Heminges was a leading member of the Chamberlain's Company.

**129. certain.** The obsolete accent on the last syllable is satirized.

**146.** Alliteration artfully used is one of the great beauties of English poetry; Shakespeare avails himself of it freely, but he satirizes the extraordinary abuse of it by the third-rate Elizabethan versifiers. This was partly due to the influence of Lyly's alliterative prose, partly to that of the earlier English poetry, such as *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, where rhyme has not yet taken the place of alliteration. The Scottish poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is also extraordinarily alliterative. With Shakespeare's criticism, cf. Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella*, 15—

"You that do dictionaries' method bring  
Into your rimes running in rattling rows"

And Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), "Ye have another method of composing your metre nothing commendable, specially if it be too much used, and it is when one maker takes too much delight to fill his verse with words beginning all with a letter, as an English rimer that says, 'The deadly drops of dark disdain Do daily drench my due deserts'". Holofernes, too, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. 1. 57, "will something affect the letter, for it argues facility".

162, 163. Note the shocking rhyme, *sinister, whisper*. 'Sinister' of course means 'left'; see Glossary.

182. Bottom cannot refrain from leaving his part, in order to set Theseus right: and he is dense enough to miss Theseus' point.

195, 196. *Limander...Helen*. Bottom mispronounces Leander, and Quince, in writing the play, has apparently confused Helen with Hero. Marlowe's adaptation of *Hero and Leander* from the pseudo-Musæus appeared in 1593. But possibly Alexander (*i.e.* Paris) and Helen are the pair of lovers intended.

197. *Shafalus...Procrus*. A mispronunciation of *Cephalus* and *Procris*. Cephalus was a faithful lover, who shot his mistress by accident. There is a picture by Piero di Cosimo of *The Death of Procris* in the National Gallery. A poem on the subject was entered in the Stationers' Registers by Henry Chute in 1593.

201. *Ninny's tomb*. Another absurd mistake for *Ninus' tomb*.

205. *the mural down*. This is Pope's conjecture; the Qq. read *the moon used*, and the Ff. *the moral down*. But 'mural' is not a word found elsewhere in Shakespeare, and perhaps we should be content with Collier's *the wall down*.

209. The practical man's estimate of poetry; true, but only half the truth.

215. The lion's part is after all more than roaring (i. 2. 60). But this was necessitated by Bottom's proposal in iii. 1. 33.

220. *A lion-fell*, 'a lion's skin'. This is Singer's emendation for the *A lion fell* of the Qq. Ff. Rowe proposed *No lion fell*.

236. There appears to be a vile pun between *lanthorn* and *horned moon*.

238. *greatest...of all the rest*. A confusion of two constructions, as in the famous Miltonic lines, in *Paradise Lost*, i. 323, 324—

"Adam the goodliest man of men since born  
His sons; the fairest of her daughters Eve".

Either "greater than all the rest" or "greatest of all" would be more exact ways of conveying the intended notion. Cf. Abbott, § 409.

242. *in snuff*, a common phrase for 'in a passion'.

248-250. The man in the moon was popularly represented with a bundle of thorns and a dog. He was variously explained as being either Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice, or Cain sacrific-



ing thorns as the produce of his land, or the man in *Numbers*, xv. 32, who was stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day. The Cain theory may be found in Dante, *Inferno*, canto xx.

259. moused. The lion shakes the mantle, as a cat shakes a mouse.

264. gleams. This is Staunton's emendation for the *beams* of Qq. F 1, the *streams* of the other Ff. The alliteration makes it a probable one.

266-277. Short rhyming lines are characteristic of such primitive tragedies as Edwardes' *Damon and Pythias*.

278, 279. A humorous way of saying 'This passion, by itself, does not move'. Steevens quotes an old proverb, 'He that loseth his wife and sixpence hath lost a tester': *i.e.* 'A wife is no loss'.

294. Tongue seems meaningless. I am inclined to accept the emendation *Sun*.

297. No die, but an ace. A pun on the sense of 'die' as an ivory cube used at hazard, on which the lowest point or 'one' is called an 'ace'. There is a further pun in line 300 on 'ace' and 'ass'.

300. prove an ass. The humour of the jest lies in the memory which the audience have of Bottom's midnight adventure.

308, 309. he for... God bless us. This is omitted in the Ff., probably on account of a statute of James I., passed in 1605, forbidding the use of the name of God in stage-plays.

311. means. Theobald's emendation of *moans* is quite unnecessary. See Glossary.

318. lily lips. Theobald read *lily brows*, thinking to get a rhyme to *nose*; but several lines in the burlesque are unrhymed, and the alteration spoils the point. With this passage cf. Peele, *Old Wives Tale* (1595)—

"Her coral lips, her crimson chin—

Thou art a flouting knave. Her coral lips, her crimson chin!"

See also the passages quoted from *Narcissus* in Appendix F.

323. green as leeks. In *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 5. 222, the Nurse accounts Paris' 'green' eye a beauty.

324. Sisters three, the three Fates. With this passage compare *Damon and Pythias*—

"Ye furies, all at once

On me your torments try :—

Gripe me, you greedy griefs,

And present pangs of death;

You sisters three, with cruel hands

With speed come stop my breath".

332. An allusion in Edward Sharpham's *The Fleire* (1607) preserves the fact that the old stage-custom was for Thisbe to stab herself, in her confusion, with the scabbard instead of the sword.

338. The irrepressible Bottom again puts his word in.

338, 339. the wall is down that parted their fathers; just as in *Romeo and Juliet*, probably written or revised about the time this play was written, the death of the lovers heals the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues.

340. a Bergomask dance. The dwellers in the Italian district of Bergamo, like the Boeotians in classical Greece, were looked upon as particularly rustic. Therefore a Bergomask dance is a dance of clowns.

357-376. The exquisite poetry of this passage comes in striking contrast to the rude mirth of the burlesque that has preceded it.

358. behowls. So Theobald, for the *beholds* of the Qq. Ff. Cf. *As You Like It*, v. 2. 118, "'Tis like the howling of Irish wolves against the moon".

370. the triple Hecate. The *tergemina Hecate* or *diva-triformis* of classical myth, who was Diana on earth, Phoebe in the sky, and Hecate in the nether world.

371. Cf. Appendix A, § 13 (*h*).

375. On Puck as a house-spirit, see Appendix A, §§ 16, 17.

376. behind the door. A somewhat untidy Elizabethan practice, unless the meaning is 'outside the door', or possibly 'from behind the door'.

386. It would appear that a song has been lost here, or perhaps two, one here, and one at line 403; but the Ff. print lines 408-429, given in the Qq. to Oberon, as *The Song*.

387-398. Cf. Milton, *Vacation Exercise*, 59-64—

"Good luck befriend thee, son; for, at thy birth,  
The fairy ladies danced upon the hearth;  
Thy drowsy nurse hath sworn she did them spy  
Come tripping to the room where thou didst lie;  
And sweetly singing round about thy bed,  
Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping head".

405, 406. These lines are accidentally transposed in the Qq. Ff.

409. Shakespeare insists, by way of close, on the dream-like symbolical character of his play.

419. the serpent's tongue, *i.e.* hissing, the reward of a bad play. Steevens quotes Markham, *English Arcadia* (1607), "After the custom of distressed tragedians, whose first act is entertained with a snaky salutation". Cf. also *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 1. 144, "An excellent device! so, if any of the audience hiss, you may cry, 'Well done, Hercules! now thou crushest the snake'".

423. your hands, *i.e.* your applause. Cf. *Tempest*, Epil. 10, "With the help of your good hands", and *All's Well*, v. 3. 340, "Your gentle hands lend us and take our hearts". The plays of the Latin comedy regularly ended with *Plaudite*.

## APPENDIX A.

### THE FAIRY WORLD.

§ 1. **Introduction.**—Two conceptions of Fairyland have impressed themselves upon the popular imagination. One is that of Shakespeare, who paints the Fairies, in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and elsewhere, as minute ethereal beings, invisible to mortal eyes, who hide themselves in the hollow of a nut, or the petals of a flower. Drayton and Herrick, to name no lesser names, have adopted this conception, and through them it has become traditional in English poetry and English art. The other is found in Perrault, and in the innumerable collections of fairy-tales, largely of French origin, which derive their inspiration from Perrault. Here the fairies are represented rather as enchanters and enchantresses than as spirits, more or less human in stature and appearance, but gifted with supernatural or magical powers. But it should be noticed that both of these are essentially *literary* conceptions. The traditional fairies of rural belief, the little green creatures who dwell in the fairy hills and dance in the fairy-rings, are not quite the same as either the fairies of Shakespeare, or the fairies of Perrault. How then is the fairy of literature related to the fairy of folk-lore?<sup>1</sup>

§ 2. **Fay and Fairy.**—A good deal of ink has been spilt on the derivation of the word *Fairy*. But philologists seem to

<sup>1</sup> The student who wishes to pursue the subject of fairy lore will find the following books, amongst others, useful:—W. C. Hazlitt, *Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare* (1875). [This is a collection of illustrative texts, including those printed in Ritson's *Fairy Tales* (1831) and Halliwell's *Shakespeare Society Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of a Midsummer-Night's Dream* (1845).] T. F. Thistleton Dyer, *Folk Lore of Shakespeare* (1883). T. Keightley, *Fairy Mythology* (1852). Drake, *Shakespeare and his Times* (1817). W. Bell, *Shakespeare's Puck* (1859). L. F. A. Maury, *Les Fées du Moyen Âge* (1853). E. S. Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales* (1891). W. J. Thoms, *Three Notelets on Shakespeare* (1865). R. Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies*; ed. A. Lang (1691-1893). Perrault, *Popular Tales*; ed. A. Lang (1888). D. M'Ritchie, *The Testimony of Tradition* (1890). T. Rhys, *Hibbert Lectures on Celtic Heathendom* (1888). K. Meyer and A. Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran and the Irish Vision of the Happy Otherworld* (1895). R. Scot, *The Discovery of Witchcraft*; ed. Brinsley Nicholson (1584-1886). B. C. A. Windle, *Introduction to E. Tyson's Pygmies of the Ancients* (1894). C. C. Hense, *Shakespeare's Sommernachtstraum Erläutert* (1851); *Untersuchungen und Studien* (1884).

have come to an agreement that it is descended in one way or another from the Latin *fatum*, which means literally 'the thing spoken', and so 'destiny'. Properly speaking, the name for an individual fairy is *fay*, the Old French *fae*, and modern French *fée*. The English *fairy*, O.F. *faerie*, M.F. *fèerie*, is an abstract substantive derived from *fae*. Thus in Middle-English *faerie* or *fairy* meant originally—

(a) the *fairy land*.

"The Kyng of Fayré with his route  
Com to hunte all about" (*Orfeo*, 273, c. 1320).

(b) the *fairy folk*.

"Away with the fayré sche was ynome" (*Orfeo*, 189).

(c) 'enchantment', 'illusion'.

"Me bi-fel a ferly  
A Feyrie me thouhte" (*Piers Plowman*, Passus A, prol. 6).

Gradually, however, it took the place of the concrete substantive *fay*. The earliest instance quoted in the *New English Dictionary* is

"And as he were a fairie" (Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ii. 371).

§ 3. *Fae* and *Fatum*.—But how was the Old French *fae* derived from the Latin *fatum*? When the Romans conquered Gaul, they found everywhere a worship of local divinities, *Matrae*, *Matres*, or *Matronae Augustae*, as they were called in inscriptions written in Latin.<sup>1</sup> These were generally represented as three in number, and thus afforded a remarkable analogy to the three *Parcae* or 'Fates' of classical belief. The two sets of goddesses were naturally identified. But in the vulgar speech of the soldiers and colonists the Roman Fates were called, not *Parcae*, but *Fatae*, a Low Latin form obtained by treating the neuter plural of *fatum* as if it were a feminine singular. *Fatae* then became a name of these *Matronae* or local 'mother goddesses'. The cult of the *Matronae* was in the hands of colleges of priestesses or druidesses, generally nine in number; and these druidesses appear to have practised magical rites, and to have possessed great power over the minds of the Celtic element in the population. It need hardly be said that when Christianity came, the reputation of the druidesses did not immediately vanish. No doubt they still exercised their priestly

<sup>1</sup> L. F. A. Maury, *Les Fêtes du Moyen Âge*; Rhys, *Celtic Heathendom*, p. 100.

functions in secret, and, as they gradually died out, lingered in the popular memory as a centre for the universal belief in sorcery and enchantment. The fame of these mysterious women crept into literature. The *faes* of the earlier romances are in reality nothing but enchantresses; they differ only from the other characters by the possession of superhuman knowledge and power. But to come back for a moment to etymology. How did these priestesses of the *Fatae* themselves get the name of *faes*? Possibly through a natural confusion, when the old religion was forgotten, between the devotees of certain divinities and those divinities themselves. If so, *fae* is derived directly from *fata* by the suppression of the *t* and the conversion of *a* into *e*. Or, possibly, through the medium of a Low Latin verb *fatare*, 'to enchant'. These priestesses may have been regarded as *fatatae*, enchanted or inspired by the *Fatae*; and *fatata* might become *fae* by the suppression of *tat*, and the conversion of *a* into *e*, as before. If so, *fae* began as a participle or adjective exactly equivalent in sense to the Scotch *fey*; and we occasionally find it so used in the romances. Thus in the romance of *Brun de la Montagne* we read: "Il a des lieux faés es marches de Champagne"; and in that of *Parthenopex de Blois*, it is said of the forest of the Ardennes: "Ele estoit hisdouse et faé". So, too, at a later date, in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1393), i. 193: "My wife Constance is fay".<sup>1</sup>

§4. The Fay of Romance. — The *Fays* of the romances, then, are primarily enchantresses. They have the command of supernatural arts, but they are human in size and appearance, and are often regarded as mortal. The *locus classicus* to quote, is from *Lancelot du Lac* (ed. 1553), p. v.: "En cellui temps estoient appellées fées toutes celles qui s'entermettoient d'enchantements et de charmes, et moult en estoit pour lors principalement en la Grand Bretagne, et scavoient la force et la vertue de parolles, des pierres et des herbes, parquoy elles estoient tenue en jeunesse, et en beaulte et en grandes richesses comment elles divisoient. Et ce fut estably au temps de Merlin le prophete". The fays play a considerable part in the romances both of the Arthur and Charlemagne cycles. Morgan le Fay, for instance, is sister of Arthur, and lover of Ogier le Danois. Vivien or Nimue, the Lady of the

<sup>1</sup>With *Fatum* are connected the Latin names for wood-divinities, *Faunus*, *Fatua*; and Mr. H. C. Coote has argued in *The Folk-lore Record*, vol. ii., that the *Fays* are descendants rather of the *Fatuae* than the *Fatae*. Certainly *Morgan le Fay* corresponds to the Italian *Fata Morgana*, the *Will-o'-the-wisp*, or *ignis fatuus*. Earlier writers tried to derive *Fairy* from the Homeric *φῆγ*, the Persian *Peri*, and other impossible sources in every tongue. See Keightley, p. 4.

Lake, becomes a fay through the magic learnt from Merlin. Often the fays attend at the birth of children, and dower them with supernatural gifts of blessing or curse. And it is from this point that Perrault's conception of the fairy takes its rise. Perrault borrowed the fays of romance, and introduced them, in the form of fairy godmothers, into innumerable stories with which they had originally nothing to do.<sup>1</sup>

§ 5. **Fairies and Elves.**—But between the Lady of the Lake and Titania a great change has come over the conception of fairydom. This change is due to the identification or confusion of the fays of romance with the elves of popular belief. Every Aryan people has its tradition of a race of supernatural beings, of diminutive stature, who dwell in a realm of their own underground, and occasionally mingle in the affairs of men. These are the *dwarfs*, *trolls*, and *alfs* of Scandinavia; the *kobolds* and *nixies* of Germany; the *elves*, *pixies*, and *pisgies* of England; the *brownies* and *sleagh maith* or 'good people' of Scotland; the *korrigan* of Brittany; and the *fir sithe* or *sidhe* and *leprechauns* of Ireland. Comparative mythology has shown that this belief extends, in one form or another, over and beyond Europe. To its origin, or origins, we may refer presently; but the immediate point is that in time this supernatural race was identified with the enchantresses of the romances; the name of fays or fairies was transferred to the elf-folk, their shadowy dominion became known as fairy-land, and for the first time the 'fairy king' and the 'fairy queen' are heard of. This process was most marked when English literature began to be really English, and ceased to be Anglo-Norman. It was natural, just then, that native superstitions should be taken up into the stories from which they had hitherto been shut out by barriers of speech.

§ 6. **Huon of Bordeaux.**—But even in the romances themselves, the altered conception of the fairies may be traced. In the beginning it seems to have been due, not to English, but to German influences. The dwarf Albrich (from *alb*, the English *elf*, and *rich*, 'king') is an important figure in the *Nibelungen Lied*, the guardian of the Hoard of the Nibelungen, which was won by Siegfried. In the *Heldenbuch*, Elberich is a dwarf king, who assists the Emperor Ortnit to win his bride. A very similar part is played in the famous romance of *Huon of Bordeaux* by "the dwarfe of the fayry, Kinge Oberon". Oberon is the English form of the French

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. A. Lang's Introduction to an English version of Perrault's *Popular Tales* (1888).

Auberon, which is probably only a translation of the German name Alberich, the termination *-ich*, which does not exist in French, being replaced by *-on*. The connection of Oberon with the Huon legend has been traced back to the 13th century.<sup>1</sup> He is mentioned, for instance, by Albericus Trium Fontium in his *Chronicles* (1240) as *Alberonem virum mirabilem et fortunatum*. In a *chanson* of the same century he is the son of Julius Cæsar and Morgan le Fay.<sup>2</sup> The later romance of *Huon of Bordeaux* was turned into English by Lord Berners about 1540. Here Oberon is described as "of height but of three foote, and crooked shouldered". He was bewitched at birth by four fairies, and is king of 'the fairie' in the Eastern realm of Momur. When he dies, for he is mortal, he leaves his realms to Huon and Arthur. In Oberon we have the Teutonic 'dwarf' and the romantic 'fay' very completely blended together.

§ 7. **The Fairy Lore of Chaucer and Spenser.**—Chaucer thoroughly identifies elves and fairies. In *The Tale of the Wyf of Bathe*, 1-25, he says—

"In th' olde dayes of the king Arthour,  
Of which that Britons speken greet honour,  
Al was this land fulfild of fayerye;  
'The elf-queen with hir joly companye,  
Daunced full ofte in many a grene mede;  
This was the olde opinion, as I rede.  
I speke of manye hundred yeres ago;  
But now can no man see none elves mo.  
For now the grete charitee and prayeres  
Of limitours, and othere holy freres,  
That serchen every lond and every streem,  
As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,  
Blessinge halles, chambres, kitchenes, boures,  
Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,  
Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes,  
This maketh that there been no fayeryes;  
For ther as wont to walken was an elf,  
Ther walketh now the limitour himself  
In undermeles and in morweninges,  
And seyth his matins and his holy thinges,  
As he goth in his limitacioun".

The same conception runs through *The Faerie Queene*. The knights of Fairy-land are frequently called Elfs and Elfins.

<sup>1</sup> Sidney Lee, *Huon of Bordeaux* (E. E. T. S.), p. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> *Huon de Bordeaux* (ed. Guessard, 1860), ll. 3492-6—

"Jules Cesar me nori bien soué;  
Morge li fée qui tant ot de biauté,  
Che fu ma mère, si me puist Dix salver  
De ces ii fui concus et engerrés."

In some passages, Elf appears to be regarded by Spenser as the male, and Fay the female sex of the same species. Thus we have the following description of Arthegall in iii. 3. 26—

“ He wonneth in the land of Fayeree,  
Yet is no Fary borne, ne sib at all  
To Elfes, but sprong of seed terrestriall,  
And whylome by false Faries stolne away,  
Whyles yet in infant cradle he did crall;  
Ne other to himselfe is knowne this day,  
But that he by an Elfe was gotten of a Fay”.

In ii. 10. 70–76, Spenser gives an imaginary lineage of the royal house of Faery, which reigned in India and America. He starts with the first Elf and the first Fay created by Prometheus, and ends with Oberon and his daughter Tanaquil or Gloriana, whom we may, of course, take for Henry VIII. and Elizabeth.

§ 8. **Fairyland and Classical Mythology.**—Not only were elves and fairies regarded as one and the same, but they were also, when men began to read the classics, identified with the somewhat similar beings, Nymphs, Fauns, Satyrs, and the like, of Greek mythology. Spenser, in *The Shepheards' Calender* (June), groups the ‘friendly Faeries’ with the ‘Graces and lightfote Nymphes’. More especially, the king and queen of the fairies were identified with some of the greater pagan gods and goddesses. In the romance of *Sir Orfeo*, the fairies steal Erodys, Meroudys, or Heurodis, as the various MSS. have it, the wife of Orfeo, and he wins her back by harping. This is merely a variant of the descent of Orpheus into Hades to recover Eurydice. So, too, Chaucer speaks in *The Marchant's Tale* (983–985) of—

“ Pluto, that is the king of fayërye,  
And many a lady in his companye,  
Folwinge his wyf, the quene Proserpyne”,

while King James the First (*Dæmonologie* (1597), iii. 5) has—  
“That fourth kind of spirites, which by the Gentiles was called *Diana*, and her wandring court, and amongst us called the *Phairie*”.

§ 9. **Shakespeare's Literary Sources.**—No doubt when Shakespeare came to write of the fairies, he was acquainted with the previous treatment of the subject by Chaucer and Spenser, and in the English versions which Malory, Lord Berners, and others had made of such romances as *Huon of Bordeaux*. Had he any other literary sources to go to?



Drayton's *Nymphidia* and a black-letter tract called *Robin Goodfellow, his Mad Pranks and Merry Jests*, have both been pointed to as possibly preceding *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. But the *Nymphidia* was first printed in 1627, and there is no reason to believe that it was written long before. Probably it was inspired by, instead of inspiring, Shakespeare's play. Similarly, the prose *Robin Goodfellow* is only known in an edition of 1628, and the existence of an older issue is a flimsy conjecture. The tract itself bears internal evidence of being later in date than the play. Shakespeare is more likely to have come across some of the stray allusions quoted below (§ 18).

§ 10. **The Fairies on the Stage.**—But he was not the first to introduce fairies on the stage. There are two allusions to an old play, now lost, on the King of the Fairies. Nash, in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), says of the actors of the day, that, but for the poets, "they might have anticked it until this time up and down the country with the *King of Fairies*, and dined every day at the pease-porridge ordinary with *Delphrigus*". And Greene himself, in his *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), introduces an old actor, who boasts that he was "as famous for *Delphrigus* and the *King of the Fairies*, as ever was any of my time". Possibly this old play was the same as that played three times by Lord Sussex's men at the Rose in December, 1592, and January, 1593, and entered by Henslowe in his diary as *Huon of Bordeaux*. Aureola, wife of Auberon, and Queen of the Fairies, appeared in an entertainment given before Elizabeth at Elvetham in 1591;<sup>1</sup> and 'Oberon, King of the Fairies', is a character in the Induction of Greene's *James IV.* (acted 1589). The name is misprinted Oboram on Greene's title-page.

§ 11. **The Fairies in Tradition.**—But we cannot doubt that Shakespeare found less ample material for his fantasy, whether in book or stage, than in the living traditions of the Warwickshire peasantry. The extent of the belief in the fairies which prevailed in England up to a comparatively recent date may be well illustrated from the stories collected in Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*. Probably it is not yet extinct in the remoter regions of the west. It is true that Scot, in the passages

<sup>1</sup>Two editions of *The Honourable Entertainment given to the Queen's Majesty in Progress at Elvetham in Hampshire by the Right Hon. the Earl of Hertford* appeared in 1591. The second of these was reprinted by Nichols in his *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*. The Queen of the Fairies appears without a name in other Elizabethan entertainments, in 1578 (Nichols, ii. 211) and in 1592 (Nichols, iii. 365).

quoted below (§ 18), speaks of the old superstitions as having died out within his memory; but his statement must have applied, if at all, only to the educated classes. Doubtless they were dying out. The fairies were supposed still to exist, but no longer to appear. Chaucer (§ 7) speaks of them, with a touch of irony, as driven away by the piety of the 'limitours'; and Bishop Corbet (1582-1625), in his *The Fairies' Farewell*, connects their disappearance with the Reformation.

"At morning and at evening both  
 You merry were and glad,  
 So little care of sleep or sloth,  
 These pretty ladies had;  
 When Tom came home from labour,  
 Or Ciss to milking rose,  
 Then merrily merrily went their tabour,  
 And nimbly went their toes.

"Witness those rings and roundelays  
 Of theirs, which yet remain,  
 Were footed in Queen Mary's days  
 On many a grassy plain;  
 But since of late Elizabeth,  
 And later, James came in,  
 They never danced on any heath  
 As when the time hath bin.

"By which we note the Fairies  
 Were of the old profession;  
 Their songs were Ave Maries;  
 Their dances were procession:  
 But now, alas! they all are dead,  
 Or gone beyond the seas;  
 Or farther for religion fled,  
 Or else they take their ease."

§ 12. **The Origin of the Belief in Fairies.**—The origin of the belief in fairies is a difficult problem of folk-lore. Probably no single explanation will altogether account for it. It is a complex growth. But in the main it is clearly a relic of the pre-Christian religious ideas of our ancestors. These were much the same amongst Celts, Teutons, and the primitive Græco-Latin peoples. But they may be most closely studied in Celtic legend. The Celts believed in a shadowy land, either underground, or beneath the sea, or in some island of the west, which was the abode both of the spirits of the dead and of certain dark deities, hostile to men. There were many tales of culture-heroes, men who visited this realm, and wrested from the inhabitants the gifts of civilization.<sup>1</sup> When

<sup>1</sup> See Professor Rhys' *Celtic Heathendom* (*passim*), and Mr. Alfred Nutt's *Essay on the Celtic Otherworld* in Meyer and Nutt's *Voyage of Bran*.

Christianity came, this belief in a Hades, as we have seen was the case also with the Gaulish belief in *Fata*, did not disappear; the Chthonian deities were no longer looked upon as gods, but they were still revered as supernatural beings of a lower type: they became, in fact, fairies. The fairies, like the old gods, are invisible, powerful, spiteful, and dwell underground; just as the beginnings of human civilization came from Hades, so the fairies superintend and assist in the domestic details of which primitive civilization consists (§§ 16-18). It need hardly be said that, a belief in the fairy-folk once existing, and the original significance lost, an easy explanation was afforded for anything which struck the uneducated intelligence as unusual. The stone arrow-heads of past ages became known as 'elf-bolts', the queer circles made by decaying *fungi* on the turf, as fairy-rings; mysterious disappearances, the sudden illnesses of children, the odd sounds of a house at night, the phosphorescence of marshy places, the unpleasant sensations of nightmare, all were put down to the same convenient supernatural agency. Abnormal psychic phenomena, such as afterwards fostered the belief in witchcraft; possibly also, reminiscences of extinct pigmy races, did their part to swell the superstition.<sup>1</sup>

§ 13. **Characteristics of Shakespeare's Fairies.**—We have now to consider what Shakespeare says of the fairies, and to see how much of it is due to tradition, popular or literary, and how much to his own fusing imagination.

(a) They form a community, under a king and queen. The king has his jester (ii. 1. 43), the queen her special attendants (ii. 1. 8). The ordinary fairy subjects are sometimes called elves (ii. 1. 17, 30; ii. 2. 5; iii. 1. 177). The fairy court is apparently in 'the farthest steppe of India' (ii. 1. 69, 124).

(b) They are exceedingly small. Titania's robe is the cast slough of a snake (ii. 1. 256); the elves creep into acorn-cups (ii. 1. 31), and wear coats made of the wings of bats (ii. 2. 4): butterflies' wings are their fans (iii. 1. 175), and Cobweb is in danger of being 'overflown with a honey-bag' (iv. 1. 15).

(c) They move with extreme swiftness. Titania bids her attendants depart 'for the third part of a minute' (ii. 2. 2). Puck will 'go swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow' (iii. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. D. M'Ritchie, in *The Testimony of Tradition* (1890), derives the Scotch fairies from a race of earth-dwellers, Feens or Pechts, "unco wee bodies, but terrible strong, dwelling in fairy-hills or howes". For criticisms of this theory, cf. Mr. A. Lang's Introduction to Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies* (1893); and Mr. B. C. A. Windle's Introduction to Tyson's *Pygmies of the Ancients* (1894), pp. lxiii, sqq.

101), swifter than the wind (iii. 2. 94). He 'will put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes' (ii. 1. 175), and returns from his mission 'ere the leviathan can swim a league' (ii. 1. 174). Another fairy wanders 'swifter than the moon's sphere' (ii. 1. 7). Oberon and Titania themselves compass the globe 'swifter than the wandering moon' (iv. 1. 103).

(d) They are elemental, airy spirits (iii. 1. 164). Titania says (iii. 1. 157)—

"I am a spirit of no common rate,  
The summer still doth tend upon my state".

Their brawls incense the winds and moon, and cause tempests (ii. 1. 82, *sqq.*). They take a share in the life of nature, live on fruit (iii. 1. 169), deck the cowslips with dew-drops (ii. 1. 9), and war with noxious insects and reptiles (ii. 2. 3, 9, *sqq.*; iv. 1. 10). They know the secret virtues of herbs (ii. 1. 170, 184), can fetch jewels from the deep (ii. 2. 161), shake the earth with a stamp (iii. 2. 25; iv. 1. 90), and overcast the sky with fog (iii. 2. 355).

(e) They dance in orbs upon the green (ii. 1. 9), ringlets (ii. 1. 86), rounds (ii. 1. 140), roundels (ii. 2. 1). In *The Tempest* (v. 1. 36) they are spoken of as the

"demi-puppets that  
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,  
Whereof the ewe not bites".

(f) They sing hymns and carols to the moon (ii. 1. 102). In this they are associated with human beings. Titania had a mortal friend, a votaress of her own order (ii. 1. 123); and Hermia is to become a nun, and chant 'faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon' (i. 1. 73).

(g) They are invisible (ii. 1. 186), and, unlike the Oberon of *Huon of Bordeaux* (§ 6), apparently immortal (ii. 1. 101, 123, 135; iii. 1. 163).

(h) They come forth mainly at night (iv. 1. 101; v. 1. 393), but are not, like ghosts, forced to vanish at cock-crow. Oberon 'with the morning's love has oft made sport' (iii. 2. 389). But midnight is properly fairy-time (iv. 1. 93; v. 1. 371). They are shadows (v. 1. 430); Puck addresses Oberon as 'king of shadows' (iii. 2. 347). Perhaps their whole existence is but a dream (v. 1. 435).

(i) They fall in love with mortals (ii. 1. 65-80; iii. 1. 140, &c.).

(j) They steal babies, and leave changelings (ii. 1. 22, 120).

(k) They come to 'bless the best bride-bed', and so make the issue thereof fortunate (iv. 1. 93; v. 1. 399-429).

Oberon, Titania, and Puck require more special consideration.

§ 14. Oberon.—The name of Oberon, as we have seen, is derived, through the French, from the German Albrich. Chaucer calls the king of fairies Pluto, but Oberon is the name used in *Huon of Bordeaux*, by Spenser and by Robert Greene. In ii. 1. 6 of *The Faerie Queene* we find it said of Sir Guyon, that he

"Knighthood tooke of good Sir Huon's hand  
When with King Oberon he came to Faery land".

See also § 6. In the *Entertainment at Elvetham*, the name appears as Auberon. After Shakespeare, Drayton, Herrick, and others adopt Oberon, while in the prose *Robin Goodfellow* we get Obreon.

In *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Oberon has certain powers above those of his subjects. He was able to see 'Cupid all armed', when Puck could not (ii. 1. 155).

§ 15. Titania.—There is far less unanimity as to the name of the fairy queen. In Chaucer she is Proserpine; and so, too, Campion sings of 'the fairy queen, Proserpina', in one of his prettiest lyrics.<sup>1</sup> In the *Entertainment at Elvetham* she is Aureola; in Spenser, Tanaquil, who is also Gloriana. James the First identifies her with the pagan Diana (§ 8). So does Scot (§ 18). And this really brings us to the meaning of Shakespeare's name. For Titania is only a synonym of Diana. It is so found in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, iii. 173: "Dumque ibi perluitur solita Titania lympha". Here 'Titania' is an epithet, 'Titan-born'. It is remarkable that Golding translates the word by 'Phebe'; but there can be little doubt that Shakespeare knew his Ovid in the original.

It is to be noticed that elsewhere he has quite another name for the fairy queen. In the famous description of her in *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 4. 53-95, she is Queen Mab; and this is apparently one of the Irish names for a fairy, Mabh, though others derive it from the *domina Abundia*, a domestic spirit known to mediæval writers.<sup>2</sup> The account of Mab given in *Romeo and Juliet* has many points which resemble the characteristics of the domestic spirit as found in Robin Goodfellow (§ 16). Herrick adopts the name Mab, and so

<sup>1</sup> Printed by Mr. A. H. Bullen in his *Lyrics from Elizabethan Song-books*, p. 169, from Campion and Rosseter's *Book of Airs* (1601).

<sup>2</sup> Thoms, *Three Notolets on Shakespeare*, p. 100; Keightley, pp. 331, 476.

does Drayton, for the fairy queen, though in the eighth Nymphal of *The Muses' Elizium* the Nymph who is to be wedded to a Fay is called Tita.

§ 16. **Puck.**—Puck occupies a peculiar position in the fairy world. He is Oberon's jester (ii. i. 43) and body-servant. He is known by diverse names, as Robin Goodfellow (ii. i. 34) or Robin (v. i. 445), as Hobgoblin (ii. i. 40), as sweet Puck (ii. i. 40). He calls himself a goblin (iii. 2. 399), and again *the* Puck (v. i. 442), and *an* honest Puck (v. i. 438). A fairy calls him a 'lob of spirits' (ii. i. 16). He is essentially mischievous (ii. i. 32-57), he frights the maidens of the villagery (ii. i. 35), he plays tricks on old women (ii. i. 47-57), and upsets the housewife's domestic arrangements by stealing cream (ii. i. 36) and preventing the butter from coming (ii. i. 37), and the beer from fermenting (ii. i. 38). He esteems the jangling of mortals a sport (iii. 2. 352); he can counterfeit noises (iii. i. 113; iii. 2. 360), and transforms himself to a horse (ii. i. 45; iii. i. 111), a roasted crab-apple (ii. i. 48), a three-foot stool (ii. i. 52), a hound, a hog, a bear, and a fire (iii. i. 112). It is doubtless in this last guise that he misleads night-wanderers (ii. i. 39) as a Will-o'-the-wisp (cf. § 18). He also transforms Bottom into an ass. On the other hand, when he is pleased, he does work for mortals, such as sweeping the floor (v. i. 397), and perhaps grinding the corn (ii. i. 36, note), and brings them good luck (ii. i. 41).

§ 17. **The Element of Tradition in the Fairies.**—Many of the characteristics of Shakspeare's fairies may be abundantly paralleled from English folk-lore, not to speak of that of other countries. The conception of Robin Goodfellow may be taken either directly from popular belief, or from popular belief as reported in Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584). Robin Goodfellow is the tricky domestic sprite, who was supposed to come into houses at night and perform domestic services, expecting some simple food to be left out for his reward. If clothes were laid for him, he resented it. If the house was untidy, he pinched the maidens; if neat and clean, he sometimes left money in their shoes. This love of order is characteristic of the fairies in general, and not only of Robin in particular (cf. e.g. *Merry Wives*, v. i. 41, *sqq.*). Similar stories are told of the Brownies in Scotland, and the Kobolds in Germany. Robin was identified with Will-o'-the-wisp, the deceitful spirit, that lured travellers into marshes; and also with the Incubus, or nightmare. His functions in this last quality are shared by other fairies, such

as the Queen Mab of *Romeo and Juliet*. A full account of the life and manners of Robin Goodfellow is to be found in the prose *History* of him already referred to, but as I believe this to have been largely founded on Shakespeare, and not his authority, I prefer to quote some illustrative extracts from earlier writers.

§ 18. Early Testimonies to Robin Goodfellow and the Fairies:

(a) From Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584)—

"I should no more prevail herein [in getting an impartial hearing] than if a hundred years since I should have entreated your predecessors to believe, that Robin Goodfellow, that great and ancient bull-beggar, had been but a cozening merchant and no devil indeed. . . . But Robin Goodfellow ceaseth now to be much feared, and popery is sufficiently discovered" (ed. Nicholson, p. xx).

He includes amongst the causes of the belief in witches—

"The want of Robin Goodfellow and the fairies, which were wont to maintain that, and the common people talk in this behalf" (p. xxii).

Of the Fairies he says:—

"The Fairies do principally inhabit the mountains and caverns of the earth, whose nature is to make strange apparitions on the earth, in meadows or on mountains, being like men and women, soldiers, kings, and ladies, children and horsemen, clothed in green, to which purpose they do in the night steal hempen stalks from the fields where they grow, to convert them into horses, as the story goes. . . . Such jocund and facetious spirits are said to sport themselves in the night by tumbling and fooling with servants and shepherds in country houses, pinching them black and blue, and leaving bread, butter, and cheese sometimes with them, which, if they refuse to eat, some mischief shall undoubtedly befall them by the means of these Fairies; and many such have been taken away by the said spirits for a fortnight or a month together, being carried with them in chariots through the air, over hills and dales, rocks and precipices, till at last they have been found lying in some meadow or mountain, bereaved of their senses and commonly one of their members to boot" (Bk. iii. ch. iv.).

Of the Incubus:—

"Indeed your grandam's maids were wont to set a bowl of milk before him and his cousin, Robin Goodfellow, for grinding of malt or mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight; and you have also heard that he would chafe exceedingly, if the maid or goodwife of the house, having compassion of his nakedness, laid any clothes for him, besides his mess of white bread and milk which was his standing fee. For in that case he saith: What have we here? Hemton hamten, here will I never more tread nor stampen. . . . [Robin was probably] a cozening idle friar, or some such rogue" (Bk. iv. ch. x. p. 67).

## Of Robin Goodfellow:—

"Know you this by the way, that heretofore Robin Goodfellow and Hobgoblin were as terrible, and also as credible to the people, as hags and witches be now: and in time to come a witch will be as much derided and contemned, and as plainly perceived, as the illusion and knavery of Robin Goodfellow. And in truth, they that maintain walking spirits with their transformation, &c., have no reason to deny Robin Goodfellow, upon whom there hath gone as many and as credible tales as upon witches; saving that it hath not pleased the translators of the Bible to call spirits by the name of Robin Goodfellow, as they have termed diviners, soothsayers, poisoners, and cozeners by the name of witches" (Bk. vii. ch. ii. p. 105).

"But certainly some one knave in a white sheet hath cozened and abused many thousands that way; specially when Robin Goodfellow kept such a coil in the country . . . But in our childhood our mothers' maids have so . . . fraid us with bull-beggars, spirits, witches, urchins, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, fauns, sylens, Kit with the canstick, tritons, centaurs, dwarfs, giants, imps, calcars, conjurers, nymphs, changelings, Incubus, Robin Goodfellow, the spoor, the mare, the man in the oak, the hell wain, the fire-drake, the puckle, Tom Thumb, hobgoblin, Tom tumbler, boneless, and other such beings, that we are afraid of our own shadows" (Book vii. ch. xv. p. 122).

"So as St. Loy is out of credit for a horseleach, Master T. and mother Bunzy remain in estimation for prophets: nay, Hobgoblin and Robin Goodfellow are contemned among young children, and mother Alice and mother Bunzy are feared among old fools" (Bk. viii. ch. i. p. 126).

"The Rabbins and, namely, Rabbi Abraham, writing upon the second of Genesis, do say that God made the fairies, bugs, Incubus, Robin Goodfellow, and other familiar or domestic spirits and devils on the Friday; and being prevented with the evening of the Sabbath, finished them not, but left them unperfect; and that therefore, that ever since they use to fly the holiness of the Sabbath, seeking dark holes in mountains and woods, wherein they hide themselves till the end of the Sabbath, and then come abroad to trouble and molest men" (*Discourse upon Devils and Spirits*, ch. xi. p. 425).

"*Virunculi terrei* are such as was Robin Goodfellow, that would supply the office of servants—specially of maids: as to make a fire in the morning, sweep the house, grind mustard and malt, draw water, &c.; these also rumble in houses, draw latches, go up and down stairs, &c. . . . There go as many tales upon this Hudgin in some parts of Germany, as there did in England of Robin Goodfellow" (*Discourse*, ch. xxi. p. 436).

Scot's book was primarily written as an attack on the belief in witchcraft. Incidentally it affords much information as to all the superstitions of the day. Two other points in it serve to illustrate a *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

(1) He mentions the belief in the power of witches to transform men into asses, &c. (Bk. i. ch. iv. p. 8), and discusses at length a story of such a transformation told in



Bodin's *Liber de Daemoniis*, and in Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum*, and referred to by St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, Lib. 18. He also refers to the similar fable in the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius (Bk. v. ch. i.-vii. p. 75). Apuleius' ass recovered his human form by eating rose leaves. Scot tells another story of an appearance of Pope Benedict IX., a century after his death, with an ass's head on (*Discourse*, ch. xxvii. p. 447), and prints a charm to put a horse's or ass's head on a man (Bk. xiii. ch. xix. p. 257).

(2) He speaks of the fairies as the supposed companions of the witches in their nocturnal flights, and especially "the lady of the fairies", called "Sibylla, Minerva, or Diana" (Bk. iii. ch. ii. p. 32). Elsewhere he quotes the statement of a council that witches "ride abroad with Diana, the goddess of the Pagans, or else with Herodias, . . . and do whatsoever these fairies or ladies command" (Bk. iii. ch. xvi. p. 51). He gives also several charms or conjurations for obtaining the services of 'the fairy Sibylla'. According to *Huon of Bordeaux* (ch. cxlvii.) Sibylla held a realm in fairy-land under King Oberon.

There can be little doubt that Shakespeare knew the *Discovery of Witchcraft*. See my edition of *Macbeth* in this series, Appendix D.

(b) From *Tarlton's News out of Purgatory. . . . Published by . . . Robin Goodfellow* (1590). [ed. Shakespeare Society, p. 55.]

"Think me to be one of those *Familiares Lares* that were rather pleasantly disposed than endued with any hurtful influence, as Hob Thrust, Robin Goodfellow, and such like spirits, as they term them, of the buttery, famoused in every old wive's chronicle for their mad, merry pranks. Therefore, sith my appearance to thee is in resemblance of a spirit, think that I am as pleasant a goblin as the rest, and will make thee as merry before I part, as ever Robin Goodfellow made the country wenches at their creambowls."

(c) From Churchyard's *A Handfull of Gladsome Verses given to the Queen's Majesty at Woodstock this Progress*. (1592.)

Strange farleis fathers told,  
Of fiends and hags of hell;  
And how that Circe, when she would,  
Could skill of sorcery well.

And how old thin-faced wives,  
That roasted crabs by night,  
Did tell of monsters in their lives,  
That now prove shadows light.

Of old Hobgoblin's guise,  
That walked like ghost in sheets,  
With maids that would not early rise,  
For fear of bugs and spreets.

Some say the fairies fair  
Did dance on Bednall Green ;  
And fine familiars of the air  
Did talk with men unseen.

And oft in moonshine nights,  
When each thing draws to rest,  
Was seen dumb shows and ugly sights,  
That feared every guest

Which lodged in the house ;  
And where good cheer was great,  
Hodgepoke would come and drink carouse  
And munch up all the meat.

But where foul sluts did dwell,  
Who used to sit up late,  
And would not scour their pewter well,  
There came a merry mate

To kitchen or to hall,  
Or place where spreets resort ;  
Then down went dish and platters all,  
To make the greater sport.

A further sport fell out,  
When they to spoil did fall ;  
Rude Robin Goodfellow, the lout,  
Would skim the milk-bowls all,

And search the cream-pots too,  
For which poor milk-maid weeps,  
God wot what such mad guests will do  
When people soundly sleeps.

I do not know whether this bit from poor old Churchyard  
has been hitherto used to illustrate the play.

(d) From Nash's *Terrors of the Night*. (1594. Nash's  
Works. Ed. Grosart, iii. 223.)

"The Robin-good-fellows, Elfs, Fairies, Hobgoblins of our latter age,  
which idolatrous former days and the fantastical world of Greece ycleped  
Fauns, Satyrs, Dryads, and Hamadryads, did most of their merry pranks  
in the night. Then ground they malt, and had hempen shirts for their  
labours, danced in rounds in green meadows, pinched maids in their  
sleep that swept not their houses clean, and led poor travellers out of  
their way notoriously."

Other allusions to Robin Goodfellow may be found in Munday's *Two Italian Gentlemen*, in *Skialetheia*, in *The Cobler of Canterbury*, in Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures*, and in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. I have thought it necessary to quote only such as are of earlier date than *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

§ 19. **The Various Names of Puck.**—The passages quoted above from Reginald Scot show that *Robin Good-fellow* and *Hobgoblin* were popular names for much the same being. Tarlton adds *Hob-thrust*, and Churchyard *Hodgepoke*. 'Hob' and Hodge are indeed only shortened forms of 'Robin', and 'goblin' (see Glossary) simply means a 'spirit' or 'demon'. *Puck*, the polke of 'Hodgepolke', is also a generic term for a 'demon' or 'devil', and it is to be noted that in the text of the play Robin calls himself '*an honest Puck*', '*the Puck*'. And this is consistent with the use of earlier writers. Thus we have in *Piers Plowman*, B. xvi. 264-266—

"Out of the pouke's pondfolde no meynprise may vs feeche,  
Tyl he come that I carpe of Cryst is his name,  
That shal delyure vs some daye out of the deueles powere".

And in Golding's version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, ix. 646—

"The country where Chimæra, that same pouke  
Hath goatish body, lion's head and breast, and dragon's tail".

And in Spenser's *Epithalamion*, 340—

"Ne let the Pouke, nor other evill sprights,  
Ne let mischievous witches with theyr charmes,  
Ne let hob Goblins, names whose sence we see not,  
Fray us with things that be not".

The name has wide affinities. It appears as *Pug* and *Bug*. It is Reginald Scot's *Puckle*, the Devonshire *Pixy*, the Cornish *Pisgy*, the Icelandic *Puki*; Ben Jonson's *Puck-hairy*, and the *Pickle-häring* of German farce. A strayed traveller is *Pixy-led* in Devonshire and *Poake-ledden* in Worcestershire. The list might be increased indefinitely.

Puck is called a '*lob of spirits*'. *Lob* is the Celtic *llob*, 'a dolt', and the phrase may be explained by the rougher aspect of him among his fellows. He is a "fawn-faced, shock-pated little fellow, a very Shetlander among the gossamer-winged, dainty-limbed shapes around him". Milton in *L'Allegro* speaks of 'the drudging goblin', or 'lubber-fiend', that

"stretch'd out all the chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength".

And the cognate name of *Lob lie by the Fire* is familiar from Mrs. Ewing's charming story of a domestic Brownie. The phrase 'Lob's pound', perhaps the 'Lipsbury pinfold' of *Lear*, ii. 2. 9, signifies a 'scrape' or 'difficulty'; and is doubtless in origin the same as 'the pouke's pondfolde'. It was believed that he who set foot in a fairy-ring would never come out, another proof that the fairies were originally the dwellers in Hades.

Puck is called *sweet* Puck to propitiate him, and doubtless *Good Fellow* has a similar intention. So Kirk tells us of the Irish that "these Siths, or Fairies, they call Sleagh Maith, or the Good People, it would seem to prevent the dint of their evil attempts (for the Irish use to bless all they fear harm of)". And in the same spirit of euphemism the Greeks called the Erinnyes, the dread ministers of divine vengeance, by the title of Eumenides or 'gracious ones'.

§ 20. **The Evidence of Folk-lore.**—I have dealt at some length with Robin Goodfellow, because he is perhaps the most prominent and characteristic figure in the play. But many other points in the fairy-lore may be equally well illustrated from popular tradition, as we find it for instance in the collection of stories given in Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*. The invisibility of the fairies, their supernatural powers and night-tripping propensities, their monarchical government, the fairy ointment and the fairy-rings; all these are well-recognized features in their natural history. Their habit of stealing children and leaving changelings is the subject of a delightful chapter in Mr. Hartland's *Science of Fairy Tales*. From romance, on the other hand, we may consider that Shakespeare derived, with the name Oberon, the conception of a fairy dominion in the East, and the belief in love-relations between fairies and mortals. We have now to see finally how he modified these transmitted ideas by the workings of his own genius.

§ 21. **The Size of Shakespeare's Fairies.**—The fairies, as has been said, generally appear in the romances as of human stature. In the popular stories they are usually dwarfs or pigmies, about the size of small children. This is not an invariable rule. There is Tom Thumb, for example; Thoms cites a Danish troll 'no bigger than an ant'; and a thirteenth-century writer, Gervase of Tilbury, describes the English Portunes as being in height *dimidium pollicis*. But Shakespeare has carried this idea further than any of his predecessors. His fairies, in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and in

*Romeo and Juliet*, though perhaps not in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where children are dressed up to imitate fairies, are at least spoken of as infinitesimally small. I think the object of this is to make them elemental, to bring them into harmony with flower and insect, and all the dainty and delicate things of nature. They are in a less degree, what the spirits of *The Tempest* are entirely, embodiments of natural forces. It is to be observed, however, that this illusion of infinitesimal smallness could not be visibly produced on the stage. If Cobweb and Peaseblossom and Moth and Mustardseed were dressed to suit their names, this must have been done on a magnified scale, such as is used in staging the *Birds* of Aristophanes, or in the 'fancy dress' of a modern ball. And yet critics say that Shakespeare always wrote for the spectator, and never for the reader of his plays.

§ 22. **The Classical Element in Shakespeare's Fairies.**—Shakespeare is not afraid of anachronisms, but it is not true that he has no regard to the place and time in which his plays are cast. In *King Lear* he is careful to suggest the atmosphere of a boisterous pagan age: the Italian plays are flushed with southern sunshine: *Hamlet* is not without its touches of Danish local colouring. So, too, in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* Shakespeare does not altogether forget the Athens of Theseus. He deftly brings his fairies into sympathy with Greek myth. Titania, as we have seen (§ 15), is but a synonym for Diana-Artemis, the chaste maiden-deity who roves the forests. I do not know whether Shakespeare had in mind the essential identity of Artemis, Phœbe, and Hecate; but it is noteworthy that Titania heads the band of the moon's votaresses (§ 14 (f)), while the fairies, spirits of night, are said by Puck (v. I. 370-372) to run

"By the triple Hecate's team,  
From the presence of the sun,  
Following darkness like a dream".

Again, he has woven the closing scene into the semblance of an Epithalamion. The fays of romance and of Perrault make their appearance at birth or at christening. Shakespeare brings his fairies to 'bless the best bride-bed', fulfilling there the precise functions assigned in Greece to Hymen, god of bridals, and his train. The greatest minds have their touches of mysticism, and take delight in these curious reconciliations of things set asunder.

## APPENDIX B.

## THE TWO QUARTOS OF 1600.

The admirable Introduction contributed by the Rev. J. W. Ebsworth to Griggs' facsimile of Q 2 has, I think, made it quite clear that the relations of the texts of the two Quartos to each other and to that of the Folio are such as I have stated them to be in the Introduction. I have carefully examined the question for myself, and agree with his conclusions on almost every point. The main facts may be briefly set out.

(1) Q 1 is much superior in accuracy to many of the Shakespearian quartos. Just about 1600, the policy of the Chamberlain's company seems to have been to checkmate the piratical booksellers by putting their plays into the hands of some trustworthy man, and in this way Fisher was doubtless furnished with a reliable copy of the original manuscript.

(2) Q 2 is printed from Q 1. It agrees with it page by page, although it is set up with greater attention to typographical details, and in a simpler and much less archaic spelling. The proof of the priority of Q 1 rests partly on this spelling. Thus, as Mr. Ebsworth points out, Roberts' '*looke to it*' is clearly a correction of Fisher's '*looke toote*', and not vice-versa. On the other hand, the fact that, on the whole, Fisher's Quarto gives the best readings, is also in favour of its being the earlier version. And where the typographical correspondence of the two editions gets out, the spacing of Q 2 is always arranged so as to recover it as soon as possible. The printer is evidently working from a model.

(3) Nor can there be any doubt that F 1 is printed from Q 2. For wherever the Quartos differ, F 1 always agrees with Q 2 and not with Q 1, even when the latter is manifestly right. Many of the plays in F 1 appear to have been printed from copies in the theatre library. Sometimes these were manuscripts, sometimes printed editions. Some, such as *Macbeth* and *Lear*, had been cut down for the purposes of representation; in some, and of these our play is an instance, the stage-directions had been carefully revised and completed.

I now come to the one point in which I differ from Mr. Ebsworth. He holds that Roberts' Quarto was "an unauthorized, and presumably a spurious or pirated edition". And here he has the support of the Cambridge editors, who say, "The printer's errors in Fisher's edition are corrected in that issued by Roberts, and from this circumstance, coupled with the facts that in the Roberts Quarto the 'Exits' are more frequently marked, and that it was not entered at Stationers' Hall, as Fisher's edition was, we infer that the Roberts Quarto was a pirated reprint of Fisher's, probably for the use of the players". Now, I do not know whether Mr. Aldis Wright seriously supposes that every new edition of an Elizabethan book was entered

on the Stationers' Registers. As a matter of fact these only contain entries to secure copyright on first publication, and, occasionally, transfers of copyright. Nor do I quite understand why the players should want an edition all to themselves. In any case, I very much doubt whether there was anything piratical about Roberts' reprint. A glance at the title-pages of the two editions will show that Q 1 was printed "for Thomas Fisher" and Q 2 "by James Roberts". I would suggest that possibly both Quartos were printed "by James Roberts for Thomas Fisher". It is difficult to prove this. The types and ornaments of the later Elizabethan printers are far from distinctive, and they appear to have been freely lent and borrowed. The device on the title-page of Q 1 is certainly Fisher's own, and I cannot identify the ornament at top of that page, nor the tail-piece on sheet H 4 *verso*, as belonging to Roberts. They are not reproduced in Q 2. But the ornament at the top of sheet A 2 *recto* is of the same pattern in both Qq, though it is set up wrong in Q 2. It consists of a small conventional design about half an inch square several times repeated. Now, ornaments of this pattern, though other printers may have also used them, at any rate appear in almost all the books printed by Roberts about the year 1600. Therefore it seems to me extremely likely that he printed Q 1 as well as Q 2. If so, it is hardly probable that Q 2 was a piracy. The Stationers' Registers do show that Roberts occasionally pirated another man's book. But would he be likely thus to treat a publisher with whom he was in business relations, and would he have any chance of doing so with impunity if the book was so new as *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*? Elizabethan booksellers looked pretty sharply after their copyrights. If Q 2 was not, like Q 1, printed "for Thomas Fisher", then Fisher may have sold the copyright to Roberts, after publishing one edition, just as in the same year Roberts himself published one edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, and then sold the copyright to Thomas Heyes.

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## APPENDIX C.

### ON THE WEATHER OF 1594.

The following contemporary records will illustrate the weather of this year, probably described by Titania in ii. 1. 86-120.

(1) From Stowe's *Annals* (ed. 1631, pp. 766-769)—

"In this moneth of March great stormes of winde ouerturned trees, steeples, barns, houses, &c., namely in Worcestershire, in Beaudly forrest many Oakes were ouerturned . . . . The 11 of April, a raine continued very sore more than 24 houres long, and withall, such a winde from the north, as pearced the wals of houses, were they never so strong . . . . This yeere in the month of May, fell many great showers of raine, but in the moneths

of Iune and Iuly, much more: for it commonly rained euerie day or night, till S. Iames day, and two daies after together most extreemly; all which notwithstanding, in the moneth of August, there followed a faire haruest, but in the moneth of September fell great raines, which raised high waters, such as staied the carriages, and bare downe bridges, at Cambridge, Ware, and elsewhere, in many places. Also the price of grain grewe to be such, as a strike or bushell of Rie was sold for fiue shillings, a bushell of wheat for sixe, seuen, or eight shillings, &c., for still it rose in price, which dearth happened (after the common opinion) more by meanes of ouermuch transporting, by our owne merchants for their private gaine, than through the vnseasonableness of the weather passed."

(2) From Dr. John King's *Lectures upon Jonas* (1595), Lecture ii. These lectures were delivered at York in 1594—

"The moneths of the year haue not yet gone about, wherein the Lord hath bowed the heauens, and come down amongst us with more tokens and earnestes of his wrath intended, then the agedst man of our land is able to recount of so small a time. For say, if euer the windes, since they blew one against the other, haue been more common, and more tempestuous, as if the foure endes of heauen had conspired to turne the foundations of the earth vpside downe; thunders and lightnings neither seasonable for the time, and withal most terrible, with such effects brought forth, that the childe vnborne shall speake of it. The anger of the clouds hath been powred downe vpon our heads, both with abundance and (sauing to those that felt it) with incredible violence; the aire threatned our miseries with a blazing starre; the pillars of the earth tottered in many whole countries and tracts of our Ilande; the arrowes of a woefull pestilence haue beene cast abroad at large in all the quarters of our realme, euen to the emptying and dispeopling of some parts thereof; treasons against our Queene and countrey wee have knowne many and mighty, monstrous to bee imagined, from a number of Lyons whelps, lurking in their dennes and watching their houre, to vndoe vs; our expectation and comfort so fayled vs in France, as if our right armes had beene pulled from our shoulders."

(3) From a note of Simon Forman's in Ashm. MS. 384, quoted by Halliwell in his *Memoranda on Midsummer-Night's Dream*, p. 16—

"Ther was moch sicknes but lyttle death, moch fruit and many plombs of all sorts this yeare and small nuts, but fewe walnuts. This monethes of Iune and Iuly were very wet and wonderfull cold like winter, that the 10. dae of Iulii many did syt by the fyer, yt was so cold; and soe was yt in Maye and Iune; and scarce too fair daies together all that tyme, but yt rayned every day more or lesse. Yf yt did not raine, then was yt cold and cloudye. Mani murders were done this quarter. There were many gret fludes this sommer, and about Michelmas, thorowe the abundaunce of raine that fell sodeinly; the brige of Ware was broken downe, and at Stratford Bowe, the water was never seen so byg as yt was; and in the latter



end of October, the waters burste downe the bridg at Cambridge. In Barkshire were many gret waters, wherewith was moch harm done sodenly."

(4) From Thomas Churchyard's *Charity* (1595)—

"A colder time in world was never seene:  
The skies do lowre, the sun and moon wax dim;  
Sommer scarce knowne, but that the leaves are greene.  
The winter's waste drives water ore the brim  
Upon the land; great flotes of wood may swim.  
Nature thinks scorne to do hir dutie right,  
Because we have displeasde the Lord of Light."

Both Knight and the Clarendon Press editors point out that these passages are not strictly in accordance with Titania's description, because Stowe speaks of "a faire harvest" in August, while Titania says

"the green corn  
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard".

But surely one need not expect from Shakespeare the accuracy of a statistical return. These editors have not, however, drawn any argument as to the date of the play from the fact that Churchyard says in his preface, "A great nobleman told me this last wet summer, the weather was too cold for poets".

## APPENDIX D.

### THE LIFE OF THESEUS.

The following extracts from Sir Thomas North's translation (1579) of Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* serve to illustrate several passages of the play. The references are to the pages of vol. i. of Mr. G. H. Wyndham's edition of North's *Plutarch* in the "Tudor Translations".

P. 31. "Aegeus, desiring (as they say) to know how he might have children, went unto the city of Delphes to the oracle of Apollo: where by Apollo's nun that notable prophecy was given him for an answer."... (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, i. 1. 70.)

P. 35. "The wonderful admiration which Theseus had of Hercules' courage, made him in the night that he never dreamed but of his noble acts and doings, and in the daytime, pricked forwards with emulation and envy of his glory, he determined with himself one day to do the like, and the rather, because they were near kinsmen, being cousins removed by the mother's side."... (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. 1. 47.)

P. 36. "And so going on further, in the straits of Peloponnesus he killed another, called Sinnis surnamed Pityocamtes, that is to say, a wreather, or bower of pine-apple trees: whom he put to death in that self cruel manner that Sinnis had slain many travellers before.

...This Sinnis had a goodly fair daughter called Perigouna, which fled away, when she saw her father slain: whom he followed and sought all about. But she had hidden herself in a grove full of certain kinds of wild pricking rushes called stoebe, and wild sparage, which she simply like a child intreated to hide her, as if they had heard and had sense to understand her: promising them with an oath, that if they saved her from being found, she would never cut them down, nor burn them. But Theseus finding her, called her, and sware by his faith he would use her gently, and do her no hurt, nor displeasure at all. Upon which promise she came out of the bush, and lay with him, by whom she was conceived of a goodly boy, which was called Menalippus. Afterwards Theseus married her unto one Deioneus, the son of Euritus the Oechalian."... (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ii. 1. 77.)

P. 39. "The rather to give Aegeus occasion and mean to know him: when they brought the meat to the board, he drew out his sword, as though he would have cut with all, and shewed it unto him. Aegeus seeing it, knew it straight,...and after he had inquired of him, and asked things, he embraced him as his son."... (Hence the name Egeus, who, however, is not the father of Theseus in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.)

Pp. 45-47. "Furthermore, after he was arrived in Creta, he slew there the Minotaur (as the most part of ancient authors do write) by the means and help of Ariadne: who being fallen in fancy with him, did give him a clue of thread, by the help whereof she taught him, how he might easily wind out of the turnings and cranks of the Labyrinth. And they say, that having killed this Minotaur, he returned back again the same way he went, bringing with him those other young children of Athens, whom with Ariadne also he carried afterwards away...They report many other things also touching this matter, and specially of Ariadne: but there is no troth nor certainty in it. For some say, that Ariadne hung herself for sorrow, when she saw that Theseus had cast her off. Others write, that she was transported by mariners into the Isle of Naxos, where she was married unto Cénarus, the priest of Bacchus: and they think that Theseus left her, because he was in love with another, as by these verses should appear:

Egles, the Nymph, was loved of Theseus,  
Which was the daughter of Panopeus...

Other hold opinion, that Ariadne had two children by Theseus."... (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ii. 1. 80.)

Pp. 55-57. "Touching the voyage he made by the sea Major, Philochorus, and some other hold opinion, that he went thither with Hercules against the Amazons: and that to honour his valiantness, Hercules gave him Antiopa the Amazon. But the more part of the other Historiographers, namely, Hellanicus, Pherecides, and Herodotus, do write, that Theseus went thither alone, after Hercules' voyage, and that he took this Amazon prisoner, which is likeliest to be true,

For we do not find that any other who went this journey with him, had taken any Amazon prisoner beside himself. Bion also the Historiographer, this notwithstanding saith, that he brought her away by deceit and stealth. For the Amazons (saith he) naturally loving men, did not fly at all when they saw them land in their country, but sent them presents, and that Theseus enticed her to come into his ship, who brought him a present: and so soon as she was aboard, he hoisted his sail, and so carried her away....But Clidemus the Historiographer...saith that...the Athenians...were...repulsed by the Amazons....Afterwards, at the end of four months, peace was taken between them by means of one of the women called Hippolyta. For this historiographer calleth the Amazon which Theseus married, Hippolyta, and not Antiopa."... (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, i. 1. 16; ii. 1. 80.)

P. 59. "Albeit in his time other princes of Greece had done many goodly and notable exploits in the wars, yet Herodotus is of opinion, that Theseus was never in any one of them: saving that he was at the battle of the Lapithae against the Centauri."... (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. i. 44.)

P. 59. "Also he did help Adrastus King of the Argives, to recover the bodies of those that were slain in the battle, before the city of Thebes. Howbeit it was not, as the poet Euripides saith, by force of arms, after he had overcome the Thebans in battle; but it was by composition."... (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. i. 51.)

Pp. 60, 61. "Pirithous married Deidamia, and sent to pray Theseus to come to his marriage, to visit his country, and to make merry with the Lapithae. He had bidden also the Centauri to the feast: who being drunk, committed many lewd parts, even to the forcing of women. Howbeit the Lapithae chastised them so well, that they slew some of them presently in the place, and drove the rest afterwards out of all the country by the help of Theseus, who armed himself, and fought on their side. Yet Herodotus writeth the matter somewhat contrary, saying that Theseus went not at all until the war was well begun: and that it was the first time that he saw Hercules, and spake with him near the city of Trachina, when he was then quiet, having ended all his far voyages, and greatest troubles. They report that this meeting together was full of great cheer, much kindness, and honourable entertainment between them, and how great courtesy was offered to each other."... (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. i. 44.)

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## APPENDIX E.

## ON THE LEGEND OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

It is worth while to reprint the two versions of this legend which Shakespeare may have had directly before him.

(i) From Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (ed. 1587), iv. 55-166.

This tale (because it was not stale nor common) seeméd good  
 To her to tell: and thereupon she in this wise begun,  
 Her busy hand still drawing out the flaxen thread she spun:—  
 Within the town (of whose huge walls so monstrous high and thick,  
 The fame is given Semiramis for making them of brick)  
 Dwelt hard together two young folk, in houses joined so near,  
 That under all one roof well nigh both twain conveyéd were.  
 The name of him was Pyramus, and Thisbe call'd was she,  
 So fair a man in all the East was none alive as he.  
 Nor ne'er a woman, maid, nor wife in beauty like to her.  
 This neighbourhood bred acquaintance first, this neighbourhood first did stir  
 The secret sparks: this neighbourhood first an entrance in did show  
 For love, to come to that to which it afterward did grow.  
 And if that right had taken place they had been man and wife,  
 But still their parents went about to let which (for their life)  
 They could not let. For both their hearts with equal flame did burn,  
 No man was privy to their thoughts. And for to serve their turn,  
 Instead of talk they uséd signs: the closelier they suppressed  
 The fire of love, the fiercer still it ragéd in their breast.  
 The wall that parted house from house had riven therein a cranny,  
 Which shrunk at making of the wall: this fault not marked of any  
 Of many hundred years before (what doth not love espy?)  
 These lovers first of all found out, and made a way whereby  
 To talk together secretly, and through the same did go  
 Their loving whisp'rings very light and safely to and fro.  
 Now as at one side Pyramus, and Thisbe on the other  
 Stood often drawing one of them the pleasant breath from other:  
 O spiteful wall (said they) why dost thou part us lovers thus:  
 What matter were it if that thou permitted both of us  
 In arms each other to embrace: or if thou think that this  
 Were over-much, yet mightest thou at least make room to kiss.  
 And yet thou shalt not find us churls: we think ourselves in debt  
 For the same piece of courtesie, in vouching safe to let  
 Our sayings to our friendly ears thus freely come and go.  
 Thus having where they stood in vain complained of their woe,  
 When night drew near they bade adieu, and each gave kisses sweet  
 Unto the parget on their side the which did never meet.  
 Next morning with her cheerful light had driven the stars aside,  
 And Phoebus with his burning beams the dewy grass had dried,  
 These lovers at their wonted place by fore-appointment met,  
 Where after much complaint and moan they covenanted to get  
 Away from such as watchéd them, and in the evening late  
 To steal out of their fathers' house and eke the city gate.  
 And to th' intent that in the fields they strayed not up and down,  
 They did agree at Ninus' tomb to meet without the town.  
 And tarry underneath a tree that by the same did grow:  
 Which was a fair high mulberry with fruit as white as snow,  
 Hard by a cool and trickling spring. This bargain pleased them both,  
 And so daylight (which to their thought away but slowly goeth)  
 Did in the Ocean fall to rest, and night from thence doth rise.  
 As soon as darkeness once was come, straight Thisbe did devise

A shift to wind her out of doors, that none that were within  
 Perceived her: and muffling her with clothes about her chin,  
 That no man might discern her face, to Ninus' tomb she came  
 Unto the tree: and set her down there underneath the same.  
 Love made her bold. But see the chance, there comes besmeared with blood  
 About the chaps, a Lioness all foaming from the wood,  
 From slaughter lately made of kine to staunch her bloody thirst  
 With water of the foresaid spring. Whom Thisbe, spying first  
 Afar by moonlight, thereupon with fearful steps gan fly  
 And in a dark and irksome cave did hide herself thereby.  
 And as she fled away for haste she let her mantle fall,  
 The which for fear she left behind not looking back at all.  
 Now when the cruel lioness her thirst had staunched well,  
 In going to the wood she found the slender weed that fell  
 From Thisbe, which with bloody teeth in pieces she did tear.  
 The night was somewhat further spent ere Pyramus came there,  
 Who seeing in the subtle sand the print of lion's paw,  
 Waxed pale for fear. But when that he the bloody mantle saw  
 All rent and torn: one night (he said) shall lovers two confound,  
 Of which long life deserved she of all that live on ground.  
 My soul deserves of this mischance the peril for to bear.  
 I wretch have been the death of thee, which to this place of fear  
 Did cause thee in the night to come, and came not here before.  
 My wicked limbs and wretched guts with cruel teeth therefore  
 Devour ye, O ye lions all that in this rock do dwell.  
 But cowards use to wish for death. The slender weed that fell  
 From Thisbe up he takes, and straight doth bear it to the tree,  
 Which was appointed erst the place of meeting for to be.  
 And when he had bewept and kissed the garment which he knew,  
 Receive thou my blood too (quoth he), and therewithall he drew  
 His sword, the which among his guts he thrust, and by and by  
 Did draw it from the bleeding wound, beginning for to die,  
 And cast himself upon his back, the blood did spin on high  
 As when a conduit pipe is cracked, the water bursting out  
 Doth shoot itself a great way off, and pierce the air about.  
 The leaves that were upon the tree besprinkled with his blood  
 Were dyed black. The root also, bestained as it stood  
 A deep dark purple colour, straight upon the berries cast. }  
 Anon scarce ridded of her fear with which she was aghast,  
 For doubt of disappointing him comes Thisbe forth in haste, }  
 And for her lover looks about, rejoicing for to tell  
 How hardly she had 'scaped that night the danger that befell.  
 And as she knew right well the place and fashion of the tree  
 (As which she saw so late before:) even so when she did see  
 The colour of the berries turned, she was uncertain whether  
 It were the tree at which they both agreed to meet together.  
 While in this doubtful state she stood, she cast her eye aside,  
 And there beweltered in his blood her lover she espied  
 Lie sprawling with his dying limbs: at which she started back,  
 And looked pale as any box, a shuddering through her strake,  
 Even like the sea which suddenly with whizzing noise doth move, }  
 When with a little blast of wind it is but touched above. }  
 But when approaching nearer him she knew it was her love,  
 She beat her breast, she shrieked out, she tore her golden hairs,  
 And taking him between her arms did wash his wounds with tears  
 She mixed her weeping with his blood, and kissing all his face  
 (Which now became as cold as ice) she said in woeful case:  
 Alas! what chance, my Pyramus hath parted thee and me? }  
 Make answer, O my Pyramus: it is thy Thisbe, even she }  
 Whom thou dost love most heartily that speaketh unto thee;  
 Give ear and raise thy heavy head. He, hearing Thisbe's name,  
 Lift up his dying eyes, and, having seen her, closed the same.  
 But when she knew her mantle there, and saw his scabbard lie

Without the sword: Unhappy man, thy love hath made thee die:  
 Thy love (she said) hath made thee slay thyself. This hand of mine  
 Is strong enough to do the like. My love no less than thine  
 Shall give me force to work my wound. I will pursue thee dead,  
 And, wretched woman as I am, it shall of me be said,  
 That like as of thy death I was the only cause and blame,  
 So am I thy companion eke and partner in the same.  
 For death which only could, alas! asunder part us twain,  
 Shall never so dis sever us but we will meet again.  
 And you the parents of us both, most wretched folk alive,  
 Let this request that I shall make in both our names belyve  
 Entreat you to permit that we, whom chaste and steadfast love,  
 And whom even death hath joined in one, may, as it doth behove,  
 In one grave be together laid. And thou unhappy tree,  
 Which shroudest now the corse of one, and shalt anon through me  
 Shroud two, of this same slaughter hold the sicker signs for ay }  
 Black be the colour of thy fruit and mourning like alway,  
 Such as the murder of us twain may evermore bewray. }  
 This said, she took the sword, yet warm with slaughter of her love,  
 And setting it beneath her breast did to the heart it shove.  
 Her prayer with the gods and with their parents took effect,  
 For when the fruit is thoroughly ripe, the berry is bespect  
 With colour tending to a black. And that which after fire  
 Remained, rested in one tomb as Thisbe did desire.

In the 1593 edition the misprint "Minus tombe", which occurs also in Thomson's poem, is corrected, and the line about the wall runs—

"O thou envious wall (they said) why letst thou lovers thus?"

(ii) From I. Thomson's *A New Sonet of Pyramus and Thisbe* to the [tune of] *Downe right Squier* in Clement Robinson's *A Handeful of Pleasant Delites* (1584).

You dames, I say, that climb the mount of Helicon,  
 Come on with me, and give account what hath been done.  
 Come tell the chance ye Muses all,  
 and doleful news,  
 Which on these lovers did befall,  
 which I accuse.  
 In Babylon not long ago  
 a noble prince did dwell,  
 Whose daughter bright dimm'd each one's sight  
 so far she did excel.  
 Another lord of high renown  
 who had a son,  
 And dwelling there within the town  
 great love begun:  
 Pyramus this noble knight  
 I tell you true:  
 Who with the love of Thisbe bright  
 did cares renew:  
 It came to pass their secrets was  
 beknown unto them both:  
 And then in mind they place do find  
 where they their love unclthe.  
 This love they use long tract of time,  
 till it befall  
 At last they promised to meet at prime  
 by Minus' well,  
 Where they might lovingly embrace  
 in love's delight.

That he might see his Thisbie's face  
 and she his sight.  
 In joyful case, she approached the place  
 Where she her Pyramus  
 Had thought to view'd but was renew'd  
 to them most dolorous.  
 Thus while she stays for Pyramus  
 there did proceed  
 Out of the wood a lion fierce,  
 Made 'Thisbie dread:  
 And as in haste she fled away  
 her mantle fine  
 The lion tare instead of prey,  
 till that the time  
 That Pyramus proceeded thus  
 and see how lion tare  
 The mantle this of Thisbie his,  
 he desperately doth fare.  
 For why he thought the lion had  
 fair Thisbie slaine.  
 And then the beast with his bright blade  
 he slew certain:  
 Then made he moan and said alas.  
 (O wretched wight)  
 Now art thou in a woful case  
 for Thisbie bright:  
 O gods above, my faithful love  
 shall never fail this need:  
 For this my breath by fatal death  
 shall weave Atropus' thread.  
 Then from his sheath he drew his blade  
 and to his heart  
 He thrust the point, and life did vade  
 with painful smart.  
 Then Thisbie she from cabin came  
 with pleasure great,  
 And to the well apace she ran  
 there for to treat:  
 And to discuss to Pyramus  
 of all her former fears.  
 And when slain she found him truly,  
 she shed forth bitter tears.  
 When sorrow great that she had made  
 she took in hand  
 The bloody knife to end her life  
 by fatal band.  
 You ladies all peruse and see  
 the faithfulness,  
 How these two lovers did agree  
 to die in distress:  
 You Muses wail, and do not fail,  
 but still do you lament  
 Those lovers twain who with such pain  
 did die so well content.

Chaucer's *Legenda Tesbe Babilonie, Martiris*, in his *Legend of Good Women* (circ. 1384), follows Ovid closely. But for the "envious wall" of Golding (line 28), Chaucer has

"Thus wolde they seyn:—'allas! thou wikked wal'";

with which compare v. I. 178.

## APPENDIX F.

## ON THE PLAY OF "NARCISSUS".

In 1893, Miss Margaret L. Lee, of St. Hugh's Hall, Oxford, published, from the Rawlinson Poet. MS. 212, a play called *Narcissus, a Twelfth Night Merriment*. This was played at St. John's College, Oxford, in 1602, and professes to have been acted by "youths of the Parish". It is a burlesque, much in the vein of the *Pyramus and Thisbe* interlude in *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, of the story of Narcissus, told in the third book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is clearly due to the influence of our play, for at line 494 occurs the stage-direction *Enter one with a buckett and boughes and grasse*. This impersonation of a Well is palpably modelled on that of Wall and Moonshine. The following verbal reminiscences of *Midsummer-Night's Dream* may also be noted:—

(1) line 109: "It is a most condolent tragedye wee shall move". Cf. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, i. 2. 21: "I will condole in some measure"; and i. 2. 33: "a lover is more condoling".

(2) line 239: "O furious fates, O three thread-thrumming sisters." Cf. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. 1. 274-276—

" Approach, ye Furies fell,  
O Fates, come, come,  
Cut thread and thrum".

(3) line 266: "Phibbus walls". Cf. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, i. 2. 28: "Phibbus car".

(4) The blunders of 'Late-mouse' for 'Latmus' (line 279) and 'Davis' for 'Davus' (line 400) remind us of 'Limander', 'Shafalus' and Procrus', and 'Ninny's tomb'.

(5) lines 341-347—

" O thou whose cheeks are like the skye so blewe,  
Whose nose is rubye, of the sunlike hue,  
Whose forehead is most plaine without all rinkle  
Whose eyes like starrs in frosty night doe twinkle,  
Most hollowe are thy eyelidds, and thy ball  
Whiter than ivory, brighter yea withall,  
Whose ledge of teeth is brighter far than jett is,  
Whose lipps are too, too good for any lettice."

And again, lines 677-8—

" But oh remaine and let thy christall lippe  
No more of this same cherry water sip".

Cf. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. 1. 317-319.

(6) lines 408-411—

" *Florida.* As true as Helen was to Menela,  
So true to thee will be thy Florida.  
*Clois.* As was to trusty Pyramus truest Thisbee  
So true to you will ever thy sweete Clois be."

Cf. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. i. 195-198.



## APPENDIX G.

## ON THE ALLEGORY IN ii. i. 148-168.

There can be no doubt that in "the imperial votaress", the "fair vestal throned by the west", Shakespeare intended a graceful compliment to Elizabeth, the "virgin Queen". Two fantastic attempts have been made to interpret the rest of the passage as an allegory in a similar vein.

(1) Warburton suggested that by the mermaid was intended Mary Queen of Scots, so called (1) "to denote her reign over her kingdom situate in the sea; and (2) her beauty and intemperate lust"; that the dolphin is her husband, the Dauphin of France; that the "rude sea" is Scotland, and that the falling stars are the English nobles who ruined themselves in her cause.

(2) Halpin<sup>1</sup> explained the mermaid and the stars as part of the pageant and the fireworks at the "Princely Pleasures" with which the Earl of Leicester entertained Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575. Of these festivities several contemporary accounts exist, and it is quite possible that Shakespeare may himself have been present at them as a boy of 11, since Kenilworth is at no great distance from Stratford. During this visit Leicester attempted to win Elizabeth's hand, while he was at the same time carrying on an intrigue with Lettice, Countess of Essex, whom he afterwards married. Halpin believed that these events were referred to in the play, and that the Countess of Essex was the "little western flower". He found another secret history of Leicester's love-affairs in Lyly's *Endymion*, in which he considered that the Countess figures as *Floscula*.

Halpin's explanation of the mermaid and the stars is certainly more plausible than Warburton's, and there may very likely be some allusion in the passage to Leicester's unsuccessful wooing of Elizabeth. But I much doubt the identification of the "western flower" with Lady Essex. It would hardly give Elizabeth any great pleasure to recall Leicester's relations with that frail lady; and as the flower is an essential factor in the plot of the play there is really no necessity at all to twist it into an historical allusion.

## APPENDIX H.

## ON WILLIAM STANLEY, SIXTH EARL OF DERBY.

William Stanley was the younger son of Edward, fourth Earl of Derby. He was born in 1561. In 1572 he went with his elder

<sup>1</sup> *Oberon's Vision*. By the Rev. N. J. Halpin. (Shakespeare Society, 1843.)

brother, Ferdinando, Lord Strange, to St. John's College, Oxford. In 1582 he went abroad with a tutor, Richard Lloyd, and travelled in France, Spain, Germany, Egypt, the Holy Land, Turkey, Russia, and Greenland. His adventures, as Herodotus says, "won their way to the mythical". It is not certainly known at what date he returned to England, but from 1587 to 1590 he was going and coming between London and his father's houses in the north. By the deaths of his father on 25th Sept., 1593, and of his brother Ferdinando on 16th April, 1594, he became Earl of Derby. In the following year he married Elizabeth Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford. Stowe in his *Annals* thus records the event:—

"The 26 of January William Earl of Derby married the Earl of Oxford's daughter at the court then at Greenwich, which marriage feast was there most royally kept".

I am convinced that an Elizabethan marriage feast could not be "royally kept" without a masque, or something corresponding to a masque.

In 1599–1600 the Earl of Derby himself entertained a company of players, who acted at court on Feb. 5, 1600. He seems to have even written plays for them. Two letters preserved in the Record Office (*Cal. Dom. Eliz.* 271; 34, 35) speak of him in June, 1599, as engaged in "penning comedies for the common players". I owe some of the above facts to three papers by the late Mr. James Greenstreet in the *Genealogist* (new series, vii. 205; viii. 8, 137). But Mr. Greenstreet says nothing of the marriage or of its possible connection with *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Nor does he seem to have known anything of Lord Derby's players. If he had, perhaps he would have refrained from trying to prove that the "common players" for whom the "comedies" were written were the Chamberlain's men, and, in fact, that William Stanley was William Shakespeare.

## APPENDIX I.

### ON W. BETTIE'S TITANA AND THESEUS.

In ii. 1. 74–80, Oberon taunts Titania with an old love-story between her and Theseus. Oberon himself, according to romance, was the son of Morgan la Fay and Julius Cæsar (cf. Appendix A, § 6, p. 138), but I can find no hint of any relations between Theseus and the Fairy Queen before Shakespeare. Probably he invented it in order to link two of the stories of his plot together. The following noticeable entry occurs in the *Stationers' Register* for 1608:—

13 Augusti

Master Pavier. Entered for his copy under the hands of Master Wilson and the Wardens, A book, being *A History of Tytana and Theseus*.

If an edition was published in 1608, it does not appear to have survived. The work probably passed, with Pavier's other copyrights, to Edward Brewster and Robert Bird in 1626. An edition was published in 1636, of which a few copies are in the British Museum, the Bodleian, and elsewhere. The book is described on the title-page as *The History of Titana and Theseus*, and the author's name is given as W. Bettie. It is a regular Elizabethan love-pamphlet, written in the style of Lyly and Greene. But it is disappointing to find that there is nothing about the Queen of the Fairies in it. Titana is the daughter of Meleager, King of Achaia, with whom Theseus falls in love, and whom he ultimately marries after much parental opposition, and various wanderings, in the course of which he is entertained by the Landgrave of Hesse, and is landed by a Venetian merchant on the coast of Bohemia. There is no sign in plot or language that the novel either inspired or was in any way inspired by *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. But it is just possible that if, as is likely enough, W. Bettie translated from an earlier Italian original, Shakespeare may have been struck by the conjunction of names, and have borrowed that of Titana or Titania for his Fairy Queen. The likelihood that he got it from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, iii. 171, is certainly diminished by the fact that Golding does not there preserve it in his translation. (See Appendix A, § 15.)

## ESSAY ON METRE.

§ 1. Introduction.—The play of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is written partly in prose and partly in verse, and the verse, again, is partly rhymed and partly unrhymed. The present essay is intended to explain the meaning of these distinctions and to point out the way in which Shakespeare used the various modes of expression at his command.<sup>1</sup>

§ 2. Stress. The possibility of verse depends mainly upon that quality of speech which is known as *stress* or *accent*. Speech is made up of a succession of *syllables*, that is, of sounds or groups of sounds, each consisting of a vowel, or of a vowel accompanied by one or more consonants, and pronounced by a single muscular effort. This succession is broken up by pauses, which range in length from the slight pause after each word to the important pause at the end of a sentence. Syllables differ amongst themselves in various manners, which depend upon variations in the complicated physical processes by which sounds are produced. We are here only concerned with two of these differences, namely *quantity* and *stress*. The *quantity* of a syllable is measured by the time which the effort of pronouncing it takes. Syllables are classified according to quantity as *long* or *short*. Nearly all Latin and Greek metres rest upon this distinction, but in English it is of secondary importance (see §§ 8. (ii), (iii), (viii); 12.

<sup>1</sup> The student who wishes to pursue the subject of Shakespeare's metre further may find the following books and essays, amongst many others, useful. Goswin König, *Der Vers in Shakspeare's Dramen* (a mine of learning by a German who cannot scan English); J. B. Mayor, *Chapters on English Metre* (on the whole, the most suggestive introduction to the subject); E. A. Abbott, *Shakespearean Grammar* (§§ 452-515); Henry Sweet, *History of English Sounds*; Sidney Lanier, *The Science of English Verse*; J. A. Symonds, *Blank Verse*; J. Schipper, *Englische Metrik* (1881-1888), *Grundriss zu Englischen Metrik* (1895); A. J. Ellis, *Early English Pronunciation* (E.E.T.S.); Robert Bridges, *Milton's Prosody* (1894); C. H. Herford, *Outline of Shakespeare's Prosody in Richard II.* (Warwick Series); N. Delius, *Die Prosa in Shakespeare's Dramen* (in *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, v. 227); J. Heuser, *Der Coupletreim in Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Jahrbuch*, xxviii. 177; xxix.-xxx. 235); H. Sharpe, *Prose in Shakespeare's Plays* (*Transactions of the New Shakespeare Society*, 1880-1882, p. 523). The "verse tests" are dealt with in N. S. Soc. *Transactions* for 1874 (passim); F. G. Fleay, *Shakespeare Manual* (1875), *Metrical Tests applied to Shakespeare* (in Ingleby's *Shakespeare, the Man and the Book*, part ii., 1881, p. 50); F. J. Furnivall, *Introduction to Gervinus' Commentaries*; W. Hertzberg, *Metrisches, Grammatisches, Chronologisches zu Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Jahrbuch*, xiii. 248); H. Conrad, *Metrische Untersuchungen zur Feststellung des Abfassungszeit von Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Jahrbuch*, xxxi. 318), and G. König, *op. cit.* ch. vii.

(iii). The *stress* of a syllable is the amount of force or impulse with which it is uttered. Every syllable of course requires some of this force or impulse to be audible at all; but it is customary to speak of syllables which have more of it as *stressed*, and of those which have less as *unstressed*. Thus in the word *Oberon*, the first syllable is stressed, the last two are unstressed. *Stress* is sometimes called *accent*, and is conveniently denoted by a ('), thus, *O'beron*. Most words other than monosyllables have a normal stress on one or more syllables, and it is a tendency of English, as of all Teutonic languages, to throw this stress as near the beginning of the word as possible. (See, however, § 10.) Long monosyllables are also normally stressed. Short monosyllables, however, and some dissyllables have no normal stress, but are capable of receiving one, if the meaning they convey is of importance in the sentence. This deliberate imposition of a stress for the purpose of bringing out a meaning is called *emphasis*.

[N.B.—Some writers distinguish not merely between unstressed and stressed syllables, but between unstressed, lightly or weakly stressed, and strongly stressed syllables. As a matter of fact, the degrees of stress which a syllable is capable of receiving are more numerous than either of these classifications implies; and on this fact much of the beauty of verse depends. But, for the purposes of scansion, the important thing is not the absolute amount of stress, but the relative stress of the syllables in the same foot (cf. § 3). The introduction of light stress appears to me only to confuse matters, because if you use the threefold classification, no two readers will agree in the amount of stress to be put on particular syllables: it is hard enough to get them to do so with the twofold division. Moreover, in practice, the notion of light stress has led many metrists to disregard level rhythms, such as the pyrrhic or the spondee, altogether. Yet such assuredly exist. This is not the place to discuss the subject at length, but it is right to explain my departure from usage. But let me repeat, that the limits of variation both in stress and rhythm are much beyond what any system of scansion can comprehend.]

§ 3. *Rhythm*. Stress is a quality of speech, alike in prose and verse; and, moreover, alike in prose and verse, when stressed and unstressed syllables follow each other in such an order as to be pleasing to the ear, the result is *rhythm*. But the rhythm of verse is much more definite than that of prose. Verse consists of *feet* arranged in *lines*; that is to say, its rhythm depends upon a series of groups of syllables, in each of which groups the stress is placed according to a recognized law, while the series is broken at regularly recurring intervals by a pause. And the various kinds of rhythm, or *metres*, may be classified according to (a) the number of feet or syllables in the line, and (b) the position of the stress in the foot. The

principal kinds of feet are best known by names adapted from the classical quantitative metres. They are these:—

In ascending rhythm.		
<i>Iamb.</i>	Non-stress + Stress,	as, apáce.
<i>Anapaest.</i>	Non-stress + non-stress + stress,	as, i' the thróat.
In descending rhythm.		
<i>Trochee.</i>	Stress + non-stress,	as, háppy.
<i>Dactyl.</i>	Stress + non-stress + non-stress,	as, dówager.
In level rhythm.		
<i>Spondee.</i>	Stress + stress,	as, stép-dáme.
<i>Pyrrhic.</i>	Non-stress + non-stress,	as, in the.

Most kinds of English verse can be *scanned*, that is, metrically analysed, as combinations of one or more of these feet in lines of different length.

§ 4. **Rhyme.** Another quality, which may or may not be present in English verse is *rhyme*. This is produced when the last stressed syllables of two or more neighbouring lines have the same or nearly the same sound. The ordinary form of rhyme is that in which the same vowel and final consonantal sounds are accompanied by a different initial consonantal sound; as *ring, sing*. Where there is no such different initial consonant, the rhyme is called *identical* (cf. e.g. iii. 1. 151, 156, 159). Where all the consonantal sounds differ, and only the vowel sound is the same, as in *ring, kill*, then *assonance* and not rhyme is produced.

§ 5. **Blank Verse.**—The principal metre used by Shakespeare is the iambic decasyllable or *heroic* line. This consists, normally, of five iambic feet, with a pause after the second or third foot as well as at the end of the line; thus:

When wheat' | is green', | when haw' | thorn buds' | appear' (i. 1. 185).

Rhyme may or may not be present. On the rhymed varieties see § 17; but far more important for the study of Shakespeare is the unrhymed variety, generally known as *blank verse*. Blank verse was first used in English by the Earl of Surrey in his translation of the *Aeneid*. It became the fashion amongst the court writers of tragedy, who thought with Sidney that to eliminate rhyme was to be classical; and was introduced into the popular drama by Marlowe in his *Tamburlaine*. Nash satirized the “drumming decasyllabon”, but the new metre proved so suitable for dramatic purposes, that it soon relegated rhyme to a quite secondary position. Elizabethan drama is practically a blank-verse drama.

§ 6. **The Type of Blank Verse and its Varieties.**—We have seen that a blank-verse line is normally composed of

five iambic feet, with a middle and a final pause. But to compose an entire poem of lines rigidly adhering to this structure would involve two difficulties. In the first place it would produce a terrible monotony of effect; and in the second place it would be an intolerable restraint upon expression. It would be impossible so to arrange words that they should fall into sections of exactly equal length and exactly similar stress, and should yet convey adequately the poet's meaning. Therefore all writers of blank verse have allowed themselves to deviate very considerably from the normal type, within the limits of this general principle, that the variations must never extend so far as to prevent that type from being easily recognizable as that of the verse as a whole. The interpretation of this principle depends, of course, upon the ear of the particular writer; each handles his blank verse in a different and individual fashion. In the case of Shakespeare we may go further and say, that his fashion of handling blank verse was constantly changing from the beginning to the end of his poetic career. Therefore it is necessary to examine each play separately, and to determine for each the limits within which Shakespeare's ear allowed him to vary his metre at the time when he wrote it. In doing this it is well to remember that the results can only be approximate and not scientifically precise; for this reason, that just as Shakespeare wrote by ear and not by *a priori* rules, so the ear of the reader—the educated ear of the cultivated reader—is the only ultimate criterion of how any individual line is to be scanned. And though in the main such readers will agree, there will always be certain lines which can be read in two ways, one of which will sound best to one ear, one to another. See *e.g.* §§ 8 (ii), (c), (e); 12 (iii).

§ 7. **Variations in the Materials of Verse.**—But before we proceed to inquire what varieties of blank verse Shakespeare permitted himself in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, we have to consider another question hardly less important. In all verse the problem before the writer is to accommodate to a given type of metre words of varying stress and a varying number of syllables. Where difficulties arise, two courses are open—either to modify the metre or to modify the words. For both are alike capable, within limits, of modification. The normal pronunciation of any word is that which an educated reader of careful enunciation would give to it in reading prose. But this normal pronunciation, especially as regards the number of syllables, is often modified: (a) dialectically, (b) colloquially. Thus we say 'em for *them*, and even, I am afraid,

'cos for *because*. And poetry has at all times claimed for itself, within certain customary bounds, a still larger license of modification. What has been said so far applies to modern as well as Elizabethan poetry. But it must be added that the bounds of this license were very much wider for an Elizabethan than they are for us. Elizabethan pronunciation, like Elizabethan grammar, was in a transition stage. Our comparative uniformity in the matter had been by no means arrived at. Even the normal pronunciation differed in many respects from ours. Thus Shakespeare regularly said *perséver* (iii. 2. 237) where we say *persevere*, and, probably, *neeld* (iii. 2. 204) where we say *needle*. But in addition to this, there were many obsolete pronunciations which, though they had ceased to be normal, were still living enough not to be out of place in poetry. Without distinguishing between licenses which are and those which are not still possible to us in verse, we will consider what amount of variation we have to allow for in reading *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* from our own normal prose pronunciation. And this (a) as regards the number of syllables in a word; (b) as regards the position of stress. After which we can go on to the varieties of metre itself.

[*N.B.*—It is sometimes convenient to mark a suppressed or slurred letter by an apostrophe (*th'*), or by a dot underneath it (*e*); a separately-sounded syllable by a diæresis (¨) on the vowel, and two merged syllables by a circumflex (ˆ).]

§ 8. Syllabic Variation.—(i) The unstressed *e* of the verb and noun inflexions was gradually disappearing in Shakespeare's time. He sounds it, on the whole, more frequently in the earlier than in the later plays, but his use varies for the different forms. In some the sounded *e* is the rule, in others the exception. Thus:

(a) *-es* (3 pers. sing.). The uncontracted form is only found in *knockēs* (1 *Henry VI.*, i. 3. 5), *provokēs* (2 *Henry VI.*, iv. 7. 8), both of which are possibly un-Shakespearean; and *peepēs* (*Winter's Tale*, iv. 4. 148).

(b) *-es* (gen. sing.). Here, too, the uncontracted form is practically obsolete; but our play has two instances—*moonēs* (ii. 1. 7), and *nightēs* (iv. 1. 93), and there are a few others in early plays.

(c) *-eth* (3 pers. sing.). Contraction is the rule. But we have *mis-takēth* (ii. 1. 52), *slayēth* (ii. 1. 190), *constrainēth* (iii. 2. 428), *charmēth* (iv. 1. 80). There are similar exceptions in all the early plays.

(d) *-est* (2 pers. sing.). Always contracted in this play, although the uncontracted form is found in other early plays.

(e) *-est* (superl.). Here, on the contrary, the uncontracted form is normal. Contraction is found in some of the later plays; in ours, the only possible example is *shallowest* (iii. 2. 13), and that is probably to be read *shallowest* (cf. (ii) *j*).



(f) *-ed* (perf.). Contraction is the rule; but we have *ravish'd* (ii. i. 78).  
 (g) *-ed* (part.). Both contracted and uncontracted forms are freely used, though the former are the most numerous.

(h) *-en* (part.). Always contracted in *stol'en* (i. i. 32, &c.).  
 [N.B.—These rules do not apply to cases of sibilants before *-es*, *-est*, or of dentals before *-eth*, *-ed*, where the *e* is necessarily sounded.]

(ii) An unaccented short vowel coming between two consonants may be elided or slurred in almost any place. This is especially so when the vowel is followed by *l*, *n*, or *r*. These consonants, with *m*, are known as *liquids* or *vowel-likes*. When a vowel-like follows another consonant, it makes the very slightest difference in the pronunciation, whether a vowel sound is interposed or not. This may be tested by comparing the pronunciation of *able* (so written, but pronounced *abel*) and *ably*. Instances of such elision or slurring in our play are:

(a) Before *l*—*privilege* (ii. i. 220), *devilish* (iii. 2. 129), *changeling* (iv. i. 56). But the same word is pronounced *chang'eling* (ii. i. 23). In the case of *perilous*, the contracted form was often spelt *parlous* (iii. i. 12), and became almost a distinct word.

(b) Before *n*—*evening* (v. i. 39), *pensioners* (*penshuners*) (ii. i. 10); but *business* (i. i. 124). In iii. 2. 292 the same word is pronounced in both ways:

And with | her pers | onage, her | tall per | sönage.

The contraction is found in *fallen* (iii. 2. 417) and *stol'en* (i. i. 32, &c.); (on this see also § 8 (i) (h)); and in *heaven* (ii. i. 243, &c.), *given* (i. i. 28, &c.), *even* (iii. 2. 68, &c.), *seven* (i. i. 159), though the last three words might be treated as *g'en*, *e'en*, *se'en* (as in *sen-night*) under § 8 (v.).

(c) Before *r*—*withering* (i. i. 6), *torturing* (v. i. 37), *mulberry* (v. i. 147), *distemperature* (ii. i. 106), *preposterously* (iii. 2. 121), *promontory* (ii. i. 149), *sovereignty* (i. i. 82); but *funerals* (i. i. 14), *forgeries* (ii. i. 81), and, of course, *aust'urity* (i. i. 90), where the vowel is stressed. In ii. i. 123 we have *votaress*, in ii. i. 163 probably *votäress*. The word *spirit* presents difficulties. It occurs altogether ten times in the play. In eight of these it is not contracted, two instances (ii. i. 211 and iii. 2. 4) falling under § 13. But in i. i. 14, and probably in ii. i. 1, contraction is necessary. This cannot take the form *sp'irit*, because the first syllable is stressed. Some metrists think that in such cases the alternative form *sprite* should be used. This form in any case occurs in ii. i. 33 and v. i. 367, 379, where it is needed for the rhyme, and where it is so spelt by the Qq. F 1, except that Q 2 F 1 spell *spirit* in ii. i. 33. Others would treat the second *i* as elided before *t*, and read *sp'irit*.

(d) Before *m*—*ceremony* (v. i. 55); but possibly the first syllable in this word was sometimes pronounced *ceer*-, as in *cere-cloth*, and *cerement*.

(e) Before *b* in words ending in *-ble*—*undistinguishable* (ii. i. 100; iv. i. 184), and perhaps *admirable* (v. i. 27); but here we may also scan *admir'able* (ii. d), or by reading *howso'er* for *howsoever* (ix.), putting a trochee for an iamb (§ 12 (ii)), and altering the stress of *admirable* (§ 10 (i)), we may get—

But, how' | soe'er', | strange' and | admir' | äble.

Perhaps in all these cases we should treat the *e* of the *-ble* (*bel*) as elided (ii. *d*), though this is not the modern way of shortening the words.

(*f*) Before *c*—*innocence* (ii. 2. 45), *medicine* (iii. 2. 264), *tragical* (v. 1. 57, 58).

(*g*) Before *p*—*canopied* (ii. 1. 251); but see note *ad loc.* as to other possible ways of scanning the line.

(*h*) Before *s*—*courtesy* (ii. 2. 77), but *courtësy* (iii. 2. 147).

(*i*) Before *t*—*spirit* (see (*c*) above).

(*j*) Before *w*—*following* (ii. 1. 131; iii. 2. 82); *shallowest* (iii. 2. 13); but see (*i*), (*e*) above.

(iii) Similarly, a short, unstressed vowel sound is occasionally inserted before a vowel-like, so as to create an additional syllable. Thus we have :

(*a*) Before *l*—*jugg[e]ler* (iii. 2. 282).

(*b*) Before *r*—*wond[e]rous* (v. 1. 59). The forms *through*, *thorough*, now confined to different senses, are used indiscriminately by Shakespeare. Cf. ii. 1. 3; ii. 1. 106.

(iv) Some words suffer the elision of an unstressed prefix, especially when that consists of a vowel unaccompanied by consonants. In this play we have '*long* for *along* (iii. 2. 339), '*nointed* for *anointed* (iii. 2. 351), '*scape* for *escape* (iv. 2. 19), '*tide* for *betide* (v. i. 202), and, possibly, '*bout* for *about* (iii. 1. 96). But in this last line we may either scan *you 'bout* or *y' about* (cf. (v) below). In the case of a few words such a prefix has been normally lost. See Glossary, svv. *bate*, *bay*.

(v) Many common words, pronouns, auxiliaries, prepositions, and articles suffer mutilation in various ways, and merge in colloquial combinations. Thus we have *is't*, *be't*, *for't*, *she's*, *we're*. In i. 1. 27 we should, I think, scan *This man hath* as *This man 'th*; *I had rather* in iii. 2. 64 should be *I'd rather*; and in iii. 1. 96 *you about* may be contracted into *y' about*. Similarly *the* becomes *th'* before a vowel, and even sometimes before a consonant, as perhaps in :

I know | a bank | where th' wild | thyme blows (ii. 1. 249).

But see the note on this line, together with § 12 (iii). The prepositions *on*, *of*, *in* become *o'*, *i'*, as in *i'faith* (iii. 2. 284), but this shortening does not affect the number of syllables. These colloquial contractions are singularly few in our play; in the later plays they become very numerous.

(vi) Two adjacent unstressed vowels are often merged into a single syllable. Thus *recreant* (iii. 2. 409), *emptying* (i. 1. 216); but *confusiön* (i. 1. 149), *amiäble* (iv. 1. 2). Often this merging is due to the consonantal affinities of certain vowels. Thus

*i* readily becomes *y*, as in *companion* (i. 1. 15), *obediēce* (i. 1. 37), *warrior* (ii. 1. 71), *India* (ii. 1. 69), *spaniel* (ii. 1. 203), and so with *e* in *beauteous* (i. 1. 104). The combination *ti* produces a sound resembling *sh*, as in *patiently* (ii. 1. 140), *vexation* (i. 1. 22), *nuptial* (i. 1. 1), but we have also *nuptiāl* (v. 1. 75). With forms in *-tion*, *-sion*, the contraction appears to be normal, except before a marked pause.

(vii) Similarly an unstressed vowel is often absorbed into an adjacent stressed vowel or diphthong:

Thus *prayers* (i. 1. 197), *showers* (i. 1. 245), *fire* (fier), (ii. 1. 5), *squire* (ii. 1. 131), *toward* (iii. 1. 69), *being* (iii. 2. 69), *hour* (i. 1. 1), *our* (i. 1. 15); but *udyage* (ii. 1. 134), *iron* (iern) (ii. 1. 196), *cward* (iii. 2. 421).

(viii) By a converse process, a long vowel or diphthong is sometimes split up into two syllables, one stressed and one unstressed. Thus *hoard* becomes *hoärd* (iv. 1. 33). The word *fairy* is generally treated as a dissyllable in the play; but in ii. 1. 58 it is a trisyllable, going back to what is really the older pronunciation, *fäery* (see Glossary).

(ix) Certain consonants can be elided when they come between two vowels, and the vowels then coalesce into a single syllable. These consonants are *v* and *th*.

(a) *v*. In accordance with this principle *never* becomes *ne'er*, and *over* becomes *o'er*; possibly also we get *e'en* for *even*, *se'en* for *seven* (as in *sen-night*), and *gi'en* for *given*; but cf. (ii), (b).

(b) *th*. The most usual example is *whether*, which must be pronounced *whēer* in i. 1. 69; iii. 1. 137; iii. 2. 81; but we also appear to have another in *either* (ii. 1. 32; ii. 2. 156).

[*N.B.*—(1) Contractions of all kinds are far more numerous in the later plays, when Shakespeare was trying to cram as much thought as he could into his lines. In the present play contracted forms generally occur in the middle of the line, open forms at the end of the line or before a pause. The license of the feminine rhythm (§ 13) accounts in part for this.

(2) I have not distinguished between *elision* and *slurring*. In the one case the sound is completely dropped; in the other it is passed over so rapidly as to be barely appreciable. But in both cases it is regarded as non-existent for metrical purposes. I should add that a large number of syllables which König and others treat as slurred, I regard as forming part of trisyllabic feet. Cf. § 12 (iii).

(3) The spelling of the Qq. Ff. gives very little help in determining the more difficult questions of contraction. They only mark a few elisions, and those not consistently. Nor are such excellent modern editions as the *Cambridge Shakespeare* quite faultless in this respect.]

§ 9. **Proper Names.**—These are generally the occasion of many irregularities, but they do not present any difficulty in our play. We have *Demétrius* and *Demétrius*, *Hérmiā* and *Hérmiā*, *Hélēna*, *Helēna* and *Hélen*; *Titānia* and *Titāniā*, but always *O'beron* and not *O'beron*. *Philostrate* is a trisyllable, the *e* being mute. *Perigenia* (ii. 1. 78) should, I think, be pronounced *Périgēniā*. The most anomalous words are *Theseus* and *Egeus*; according to Greek usage they should both be dissyllables, *Egeūs*, *Théseus*, but Shakespeare always has *Egēūs*, and *Théseüs* at least twice (ii. 1. 76; v. 1. 38). Chaucer has *Théseüs* regularly in *The Knightes Tale*.

§ 10. **Stress Variation.**—The normal prose stress of certain words was, and to some extent still is, variable in verse.

(i) In words of Romance origin this is often due to the conflict between the pronunciation suggested by the analogy of Latin, and that suggested by the Teutonic tendency, already spoken of (§ 2), to throw the stress as near the beginning of the word as possible. Thus we have *revénue* (i. 1. 158) as well as *révenue* (i. 1. 6), and we have *edict* (i. 1. 151), *exile* (iii. 2. 386), *sojourned* (iii. 2. 171), with possibly *admirable* (v. 1. 27) and *luscious* (ii. 1. 251), instead of the normal *édict*, *éxile*, *sójournd*, *ádmirable*, *lúscious*. In *rheumatic* (ii. 1. 105), on the other hand, the Teutonic pronunciation is the abnormal one. *Courtesey* (ii. 2. 77) is exceptional, and somewhat awkward.

(ii) In some compound words which are still felt as made up of two parts, the stress may fall on either part, according to the emphasis desired. Thus we have *lack-lóve* (ii. 2. 77), *misprised* (iii. 2. 74), *místake* (v. 1. 90), instead of the more normal *lack-love*, *misprised*, *místake*.

(iii) The pronunciation of *sintster* (v. 1. 162) to rhyme with *whisper*, and of *certain* (v. 1. 129) is burlesque.

[N.B.—(1) Owing to the conflict between the Romance and Teutonic pronunciation, even the normal Elizabethan stress does not always agree with ours. Shakespeare always has *persever* (iii. 2. 237), generally *ántic* (v. i. 3).

(2) In some cases where the Elizabethan stress was variable, we retain both forms in different senses, thus: *ántic*, *antíque*, and *húman*, *humáne*.]

§ 11. **Varieties of Metre.**—So much, then, for the possible variations in the materials which have to be disposed into metre; we come now to those of metre itself. These may take the form of (a) variations upon the iambic character of the foot; (b) variations due to the insertion of supernumerary

extra-metrical syllables; (c) variations due to mutilation of a foot; (d) variations in the number of feet in the line; (e) variations in the number and position of the pauses.

### § 12. Non-Iambic Feet.

(i) *Spondee and Pyrrhic*. Lines containing the complete number of five iambic feet are comparatively rare. When several of these occur together, they produce an effect of regular rise and fall which is stiff and unnatural. Shakespeare reserves this rhythm for the burlesque.

You, la' | dies, you', | whose gen' | tle hearts' | do fear'  
 The small' | est mon' | strous mouse' | that creeps' | on floor',  
 May now' | perchance' | both quake' | and trem' | ble here',  
 When li' | on rough' | in wild' | est rage' | doth roar'

(v. i. 215-218).

In order, therefore, to produce a more natural rhythm, *level stress* is introduced into one or more feet. That is to say, the unstressed and stressed syllables of the iamb are replaced by two stressed syllables (*spondee*), or two unstressed syllables (*pyrrhic*): thus—

And the | quaint' ma' | zes in | the wan' | ton green' (ii. i. 99).

Here the second foot is a spondee, the first and third are pyrrhics.

The principle which limits all variations in blank verse is that the general character of the rhythm must not be destroyed. Too many pyrrhics or spondees would make the verse altogether too light or too heavy. As a rule, therefore, we do not find more than six or less than three stressed syllables in a line, nor more than three unstressed syllables together. An excess of spondees occurs in solemn passages, as in Theseus' judicial address—

What' say' | you', Her' | mia? be | advised', | fair' maid' (i. i. 46);

or in Hermia's declaration,

So' will | I' grow', | so' live', | so' die', | my lord' (i. i. 79).

When the third foot is a pyrrhic, the rest of the line is divided into two equal parts, and thus a markedly antithetic rhythm is readily produced, as in

Your bú- | kin'd mís- | tress and | your wár- | rior lóve (ii. i. 71).

By pa' | ved foun' | tain or | by rush' | y brook' (ii. i. 84).

A pyrrhic is very common in the last foot, where the pause to some extent supplies the place of a stress.

(ii) *Trochee*. Frequently the normal order of non-stress and stress is inverted, that is to say, a *trochee* replaces the iamb. This substitution is made most easily after a pause, and therefore it is by far the most common in the first foot, and next to that in the third and fourth, after the mid-line pause. It is rare in the second and fifth feet.

- 1st foot. Chant'ing | faint' hymns' | to the | cold' fruit' | less moon'  
(i. 1. 73).  
2nd foot. As wild' | geese' that | the creep' | ing fowl' | er eye'  
(iii. 2. 20).  
3rd foot. With feign' | ing voice' | ver'ses | of feign' | ing love'  
(i. 1. 31).  
4th foot. Met' we | on hill' | or dale', | for'est | or mead' (ii. 1. 83).

Our play affords no instance of a trochee in the fifth foot.

Two trochees often occur in one line, but rarely in succession. More than two would tend to obscure the iambic character of the rhythm.

There'fore | the winds', | pip'ing | to us' | in vain' (ii. 1. 88).

(iii) *Trisyllabic Feet*. In his later blank verse, Shakespeare frequently allows the stress to carry with it two unstressed syllables instead of one only; that is, he substitutes an *anapaest* for the iamb. In such cases the unstressed syllables are always kept as short in quantity as possible. Thus, in *Macbeth*—

What a haste' | looks through' | his eyes'. | So' should | he' look  
(i. 2. 46).

Thoughts spe' | cūlative' | their un' | sure hopes' | relate' (v. 4. 19).

Possibly a *dactyl* or even a *tribrach* (three unstressed syllables) may occasionally be used in the same way.

It should be noted that in many cases it must be a matter of choice whether we scan a line by means of such a foot, or by elision. Thus in the second line given from *Macbeth*, we might scan, 'Thoughts spéc | ulative' (§ 8 (ii) (a)). But in the later plays there is a certain percentage of cases which no elision or slurring will satisfactorily account for, and once the principle of trisyllabic feet is admitted, it becomes a matter of opinion how far it should be extended. The present play does not appear to me to afford any *clear* instance of a trisyllabic foot. A *possible* instance is—

I know | a bank | where the wld | thyme blows (ii. 1. 249).

But see the note on this line, together with § 8 (v).

§ 13. *Feminine Rhythm*.—Sometimes an extra-metrical unstressed syllable is added after the stress, before a pause.

The result is known as *feminine* rhythm. It is most common at the end of the line, thus—

Sees He | len's beau | ty in | a brow | of E (gypt) (v. i. 11).  
The po | et's eye, | in a | fine fren | zy rol(ling) (v. i. 12).

In the larger part of our play, feminine endings are markedly rare. In two passages, however, they occur with comparative frequency. These are iii. 2. 177-343, and v. i. 1-105. Possibly this may be a sign that these passages were revised or rewritten at a later date than the rest of the play; but, in iii. 2. 177-343 at least, the irregularity may be accounted for by the excitement of the scene. When dissyllables which admit of contraction occur at the end of a line, and there is an alternative between contraction and a feminine rhythm, the latter appears in so early a play to be the preferable mode of reading.

Have with | our needles [*neelds*] | crea | ted both | one flow(ër)  
(iii. 2. 204).

Feminine rhythm in the middle of the line is very rare in the play. We have only two instances—

After 2nd foot. That is, | the mad(man): | the lo | ver, all | as fran(tic)  
(v. i. 10).  
After 3rd foot. Not for | thy fair | y king(dom). | Fairies, | away!  
(ii. i. 144).

§ 14. **Monosyllabic Feet.**—Occasionally a line is mutilated by the omission of the unstressed syllable of one foot. The place of this syllable may generally be considered to be filled up by a gesture or dramatic pause. Like all other irregularities, this is rare in our play. It occurs in—

—Ho, | ho, ho! | Coward, | why comest | thou not? (iii. 2. 421),  
where the laugh may be taken as a rough metrical equivalent for two whole feet; in—

For part | ing us, | —O, | is all | forgot? (iii. 2. 201),  
where the third foot is filled out with a sob; and apparently in—

Mel | ted as | the snow, | seems to | me now (iv. i. 163);  
but probably this line is corrupt (cf. note *ad loc.*).

§ 15. **Long and Short Lines.**—Lines are sometimes found with more or less than the normal five feet.

Six-foot lines, sometimes called *Alexandrines*, occur twice in the play.

Therefore | be out | of hope, | of ques | tiön, | of doubt (iii. 2. 279).  
Uncou | ple in | the wes | tern val | ley; let | them go (iv. i. 104).

There are also a few shorter lines of various lengths. Here, too, a pause, or something of the kind, may often be regarded as filling up the gap.

*Two feet.* And kill | me too (iii. 2. 49).

*Three feet.* Takes it | in might, | not mer(it) (v. i. 92).

*Four feet.* I know | a bank | where the wild | thyme blows  
(ii. i. 249).

Short addresses, commands, and ejaculations can be treated in plays where they abound as extra-metrical altogether.

On the three four-foot lines ii. 1. 14, 42; iii. 2. 100, cf. § 16.

In iv. 1. 189, 190 we have—

*Hel.* Mine own, and not mine own.

*Dem.* Are you sure

That we're awake. It seems to me.

Here the irregularities must be explained, if the text is correct, as due to the confusion of a man yet only half-awake.

§ 16. **Varieties of Pause.**—The typical heroic line has a well-marked pause at the end, and a less-well-marked one in the middle, after the second or sometimes the third foot. These are of course sense pauses, as well as metrical pauses. Shakespeare modifies this original type in two principal ways—

(i) He varies the mid-line pause at will, omitting it altogether, or making it as slight as possible, or doubling it, or putting it after the first or fourth foot, or in the middle of a foot.

[N.B.—Some writers call the mid-line pause a *caesura*. This is, of course, hopelessly incorrect. The classical *caesura* was a slight pause in the middle and not at the end of a foot.]

(ii) He reduces the importance of the end-line pause, which can never altogether disappear, by putting the two separated lines in close syntactical connection. Such a connection is called an *enjambement*, and the first of the two lines is said to be *run on*, as opposed to *end-stopped*. Consider, for instance, v. 1. 12–17—

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

Here the last line and the first two are end-stopped, the third, fourth, and fifth run on. Of course it is largely a matter of degree; the *enjambement* is more or less marked, according



as it is affected by various conditions, the weight of the syntactical parts separated, the closeness of the syntactical connection, the presence of feminine rhythm, and the like. The effect of this redistribution of pauses is to destroy the independence of the single line by making it a member of an harmoniously-arranged group, a period or verse-paragraph. Through this a less monotonous rhythm becomes possible.

The variety of the pauses is much greater in the later than in the earlier plays. In *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* there are comparatively few enjambements, and where there is a mid-line pause, it generally follows the second or third foot. In the later plays Shakespeare preferred to end a speech in the middle rather than at the end of a line. In our play, this is only done thirty-two times. In the matter of pauses, as in that of feminine rhythm, iii. 2. 177-343 and v. 1. 1-105 show signs of later work than the rest of the play.

In this and other early plays we get a special use of end-stopped lines, in which a rapid dialogue is carried on, by each speaker confining what he has to say within the limits of a single line. This is the *stichomuthia* of Greek tragedy, and, whether rhymed or unrhymed, has a lyrical antiphonic effect. See e.g. i. 1. 136-140, 194-201; ii. 2. 84-87.

§ 17. Rhyme.<sup>1</sup>—About a third of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is written in rhymed verse. This large proportion is no doubt due to the influence of the masque, a species of drama to which the play has many affinities (cf. Introduction, pp. 13, 18). More than one kind of rhymed verse is employed.

(i) The commonest is the *rhymed heroic*, composed, like blank verse, of decasyllable iambic lines, but with the last accented syllables rhyming. This is scattered about in single couplets and longer passages amongst the blank verse, and it is not always possible in this play, as it usually is with the far rarer rhymed verse of later plays, to assign a definite reason for its use in any given place. But it appears to be used—

(a) In single couplets to finish off a scene or speech, or section of a speech, of blank verse. Rhyme was used by Shakespeare for this purpose almost to the end of his career. Probably it pleased the actors, who liked an effective 'curtain', and it may even have served to call attention to the 'cues'.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Heuser, *Der Coupletreim in Shakespeares Dramen*. (*Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, vols. xxviii. p. 177; xxix.-xxx. p. 235.)

As examples, see v. i. 104, 105; v. i. 353, 354. Sometimes two or three successive couplets are so used.

(b) In markedly lyrical or emotional passages. Thus in act i. sc. 1, the entry of Helen, at l. 180, coincides with a change from blank verse to rhyme, and so with the more passionate love-scenes throughout.

(c) In epigrammatic or pointedly humorous passages, *e.g.* in Puck's witty description of Titania's plight (iii. 2. 6-40). In ii. i. 268, Puck 'caps' a line of the interlude with a mocking rhyme. So Titania 'caps' herself in iii. i. 181.

Heroic rhyme is generally arranged in couplets, but in this play we often get (1) triplets, (2) quatrains or alternate rhyme (*e.g.* iii. i. 177-181; ii. 2. 35-40; iii. 2. 122-127), and (3) sextains or quatrains followed by clinching couplets (*e.g.* iii. i. 82-87; iii. 2. 442-447). In iii. i. 151-160 the same rhyme is repeated ten times.

Many of the variations described in §§ 7-16 occur also in heroic rhyme. Thus we have feminine rhymes; *e.g.*—

Were the world mine, Demetrius being ba(ted),  
The rest I'd give to be to you transla(ted) (i. i. 190, 191).

In three passages, all spoken by Puck, we get a couplet made up of a four-foot and a five-foot line; *e.g.*—

I must | go seek | some dew | drops here  
And hang | a pearl | in ev | ery cows | lip's ear (ii. i. 14, 15).

Cf. also ii. i. 42, 43; iii. 2. 100, 101.

(ii) Much of the speech of the fairies, especially the enchantments, consists of short rhyming lines of various length, in a *trochaic* rhythm. Thus—

O'ver | hill', | o'ver | dale',  
Thor'ough | bush', | thor'ough | brier',  
O'ver | park', | o'ver | pale',  
Thor'ough | flood', | thor'ough | fire',  
I' do | wan'der | ev'ery | where',  
Swift'er | than' the | moon'ës | sphere';  
And' I | serve' the | fai'ry | queen',  
To dew' | her orbs' | upon' | the green'.  
The cows' | lips tall' | her pens' | ioners be':  
In' their | gold' coats | spots' you | see';  
Those' be | ru'bies | fai'ry | fa'vours,  
In' those | freck'les | live' their | sa'vours (ii. i. 2-13).

This metre is specially used by Shakespeare (*e.g.* in *Macbeth*) for the speeches of supernatural beings. It should be noted that

(a) Iambic lines (*e.g.* ii. 1. 9, 10 above) are intermingled with the trochaic ones, for the sake of variety.

(b) The final trochee is often *catalectic*; that is, the unstressed syllable is wanting.

The trochaic metre is commonly a four-foot one. Puck's speech in iii. 2. 448-463 begins with one-foot, two-foot, and three-foot lines, and ends with a long doggerel line—

The man' | shall have' | his mare' | again', | and all' | shall' be | well'.

Such doggerel lines are common in the earliest comedies, but soon disappear.

(iii) When songs are introduced, as in ii. 2. 9-24; iii. 1. 114-122, they are of course in various rhymed lyric metres.

§ 18. **The Interlude.**—The metres of the interlude, introduced into act i. sc. 2, act iii. sc. 1, act v. sc. 1, require separate mention.

They are—

(i) Rhymed heroics, in couplets, quatrains, or sextains.

(ii) Two-foot and three-foot iambics (v. 1. 266-277, 285-296, 312-335).

(iii) Six-foot iambics (iii. 1. 82-85).

The latter two metres appear to be in parody of the cruder pre-Shakespearian tragedies. In the same spirit the heroic verse is made stiff and awkward. It is, of course, dramatically desirable to differentiate the style of the interlude from that of the rest of the play.

§ 19. **Prose.**<sup>1</sup>—Shakespeare uses prose in his earlier plays chiefly for comedy and for the dialogue of vulgar characters. Where prose and verse are mingled, it is generally to point a contrast between the persons speaking. Thus in iii. 1. 110-185, and in iv. 1. 43, Bottom speaks in prose, Titania in verse. The clowns speak throughout in prose, firstly because they are clowns, and secondly to provide a background for the interlude. For the sake of a similar background, even Theseus and the wedding company speak in prose in v. 1. 108-346, returning to the statelier blank verse when the Bergomask dance is over.

§ 20. **Metre as an Evidence of Date.**—Shakespeare's manner of writing was undergoing constant modification throughout his life, and therefore the evidence of style, and especially of metre, helps in some degree to determine the respective

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Delius, *Die Prose in Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, vol. v. p. 227).

dates of the plays. As has been pointed out from time to time in this essay, the metre of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is that of an early play. As compared with the later ones, it has few contractions (§ 8), feminine rhythms (§ 13), or enjambements (§ 16). Lines of irregular length are rare (§§ 14, 15), and trisyllable feet are practically absent (§ 12 (iii)). The free use of rhyme (§ 17), which is generally a mark of early work, does not prove much here, because Shakespeare would probably at any time in his life have used rhyme in writing what is practically a masque. On the other hand, the comic doggerel, which marks the very earliest comedies, is absent.

Many attempts have been made to fix the dates of the plays more precisely on metrical grounds, by estimating the prevalence of particular metrical characteristics in each, in numerical terms. The figures thus obtained, and the tests based upon them, seem to me so very misleading, that I have not thought it worth while to give any of them here.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The student who wishes to pursue the matter may be referred to König, *Der Vers in Shaksper's Dramen*, ch. vii., to H. Conrad's paper in the German Shakespeare Society's *Jahrbuch*, vol. xxxi., and to an essay by the Rev. F. G. Fleay in Ingleby's *Shakespeare, the Man and the Book*, part ii. (1881), which contains Mr. Fleay's latest speculations on the subject.

## GLOSSARY.

**abridgment** (v. i. 39), pastime.  
Cf. note *ad loc.*

**aby** (iii. 2. 175, 335), pay for, the M.E. *abyen*, A.S. *abyrgan*. This word, often spelt, as here in Q2 F1, **abide**, must be distinguished from **abide** in the sense of 'await', which is the M.E. *abiden*, A.S. *abidan*.

**adamant** (ii. i. 195), the lodestone, a stone possessed of magnetic properties. The word is derived from the Gk. ἀδάμαντος, 'unconquerable' (ἀ-, not, δαμάειν, to tame), and was originally applied to the diamond and other hard stones. It was probably transferred to the lodestone on account of its unconquerable attraction for iron. **Diamond** is a corruption of the same word.

**admirable** (v. i. 27), wonderful, in the sense of the Lat. *admirari*.

**after-supper** (v. i. 34), dessert.  
Cf. note *ad loc.*

**aggravate** (i. 2. 70), used by Bottom for 'soften', 'diminish'; but the normal sense in Shakespeare is the exactly opposite one of 'intensify', 'exaggerate'. Cf. *Rich. II.*, i. i. 43—

"the more to aggravate the note,  
With a foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat".

And *Edward III.*, ii. i. 24—

"That sin doth ten times aggravate itself,  
That is committed in an holy place".

**amiable** (iv. i. 2), lovable, not confined by Shakespeare, as by us, to qualities of character and temper.

**an** (i. 2. 64, &c.), a shortened form of **and** in the special sense of 'if'. The spelling *an* was rarely used in Shakespeare's time. Except in **an't** it occurs only once in F1;

but modern editors have conveniently appropriated it to the conditional sense of the word. *And* or *an* is often strengthened, as in ii. 2. 153; iii. 2. 78, by the addition of *if*. In i. 2. 86 Bottom uses *an 'twere* in the sense of 'as if it were'.

**anon** (iii. 2. 18), at once, the A.S. *on ðn*, in one (moment).

**antic** (v. i. 3), strange, fantastic. Murray derives the word from the Italian *antico*, a cavern adorned with grotesques; others regard it as identical with **antique**. In any case the spelling of the two words was not distinguished by the Elizabethans; in the present passage Q1 has *antique*, Q2 F1 *anticke*.

**antipodes** (iii. 2. 55), dwellers on the other side of the earth; from Gk. ἀντί, over against, πόδις, a foot. The use of the word to denote the other side of the earth itself is of course incorrect.

**approve** (ii. 2. 68), try, test.

**apricock** (iii. i. 150), apricot. Both forms are from the Portuguese *albricoque*, the Elizabethan one directly, the modern one through the French *abricot*. The early history of the word is curious; the Portuguese borrowed it from the Arabic *al barqūq*, of which *al* is merely the definite article, while *barqūq* = Med. Gk. *παρῑνῑον*. This in its turn came from the Latin *praecoquus* or *praecox*, 'early ripe'.

**argument** (iii. 2. 242), subject; here in the sense of 'subject for jest'.

**ay me** (i. i. 132), alas, woe is me; the O.F. *aymi*, Ital. *ahimé*,

Span. *ay de mí*, Gk. οἶμός. The *me* is here, like the Gk. *μοί*, a dative.

**barm** (ii. 1. 38), yeast.

**bate** (i. 1. 190), except; a mutilated form of **abate**, which means literally 'beat down', from the L.L. *abbattere*.

**bay** (iv. 1. 110), hunt with dogs, lit. bark at, a mutilated form of **abay**, from O.F. *aboier*, Lat. *ad*, at, *baubari*, bark. We speak of a hunt 'baying', and of a stag 'at bay', the Fr. *aux abois*.

**be-**, a form of **by**, used as a prefix, intensifies or otherwise modifies, often very slightly, the word to which it is joined. Thus in **belike** (i. 1. 130), 'very likely', it gives the sense of 'fully', 'thoroughly'. Often it simply forms a transitive verb, as in **beteem** (i. 1. 131), **behowls** (v. 1. 358), howls at, **beshrew** (v. 1. 280).

**beshrew** (iii. 2. 204), curse, lit. bring evil upon; from *be* + M.E. *shrēwe*, evil.

**beteem** (i. 1. 131), yield, supply; from *be* + *teem*, think fit, connected with Dutch *betamen*, Germ. *siemen*, Eng. *seemly*. Thus the primary sense of *beteem* is 'allow', 'suffer'. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 2. 141—

"That he might not beteen the winds of heaven  
Visit her face too roughly".

But the transition from 'allow' to 'allow to' is a slight one; and may be helped by an entirely different sense of *teem*, viz. 'pour out', 'empty', from Scand. *tom*, empty.

**bootless** (ii. 1. 37, 233), in vain; from A.S. *bōt*, profit.

**bottle** (iv. 1. 30), a bundle (of hay); from O.F. *botel*, dim. of *botte*, bundle. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**Bottom**, a weaver's term for the reel, of thread, which is the bottom or base on which the thread is wound. Cf. *Taming of the Shrew*, iv. 3. 138: "beat me to death with a bottom of brown thread".

**brief** (v. 1. 42), list; from Fr. *bref*, Lat. *breve*, short. A *brief* is therefore literally a short hand-list or summary.

**broach** (v. 1. 146), pierce; from M.E. *broche*, a sharp instrument, the O.F. *broche* or spit.

**bully** (iii. 1. 7; iv. 2. 18), a colloquial term of affection or respect, especially in low life, chiefly implying good fellowship; said to be connected with the Germ. *buhle*, Dutch *boel*, lover.

**canker** (ii. 2. 3), a worm in the bud. The **canker-blossom** of iii. 2. 282 may either be, (1) a synonym for *canker*, or (2) the flower of the dog-rose. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**cheer** (iii. 2. 96), countenance.

**chiding** (iv. 1. 113), noise. Cf. *Othello*, ii. 1. 12: "The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds".

**childing** (ii. 1. 112), bearing children, fruitful. Cf. Fairfax's *Tasso*, xviii. 26—

"An hundred plants beside (even in his sight)  
Childed an hundred nymphs, so great, so  
dight".

So the 'hen and chickens' daisy is sometimes called the *childing* daisy.

**chough** (iii. 2. 21), jackdaw. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**close** (iii. 2. 7), secret.

**coil** (iii. 2. 339), disturbance; said to be connected with the Gael. *goil*, rage, battle. Cf. *Much Ado*, v. 2. 98: "Yonder's old coil at home". The "mortal coil" of *Hamlet*, iii. 1. 67, may have either this sense, or that of something wrapped round, like a coil of rope.

**collied** (i. 1. 145), blackened with coal, darkened. The word recurs in the F 1 of *Othello*, ii. 3. 206—

And passion, having my best judgment  
collied,  
Assays to lead the way".

**companion** (i. 1. 15), in the contemptuous sense of our 'fellow'.

**con** (i. 2. 86), get to know; the M.E. *cunnen*, examine, A.S. *cun-  
nian*, a desiderative form of *cun-  
nan*, to know.

**condole** (i. 2. 21, 33), lament, not only in the modern limited sense of lamenting in sympathy with another. Shakespeare uses the word in burlesque here, and in *Henry V.*, ii. 1. 133, where Pistol says: "Let us condole the knight"; but **condolement** is used seriously in *Hamlet*, i. 2. 93.

**courageous** (iv. 2. 24), used colloquially, like 'brave', to express admiration.

**coy**, vb. (iv. 1. 2), caress. Cf. Warner, *Albion's England*, vi. 30—

"And while she coys his sooty cheeks, or  
curls his sweaty top".

**crab** (ii. 1. 48), crab-apple.

**crazed** (i. 1. 92), cracked, flawed; connected with the Fr. *écraiser*. Cf. Lyly, *Euphues* (ed. Arber), p. 58: "the glass once crazed, will with the least clap be cracked".

**cry** (iv. 1. 121), the noise of hounds; and so used for a pack of hounds, as in *Coriolanus*, iii. 3. 110: "yon common cry of curs"; or a company of anything else, as in *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 289: "a cry of players".

**cue** (iii. 1. 66, &c.), the catch-word by which an actor knows his turn to speak. The derivation of the word is uncertain, but it is probably from the Fr. *queue*, the 'tail' or tag-end of a speech.

**darkling** (ii. 2. 86), in the dark. Cf. *Lear*, i. 4. 237: "So, out went the candle, and we were left darkling".

**dead** (iii. 2. 57), deadly; cf. *Richard II.*, iv. 1. 10: "that dead time when Gloucester's death was plotted".

**defect** (iii. 1. 35), Bottom's mistake for *effect*.

**dewlap** (ii. 1. 50), a fold of flesh

on the throat; so **dewlapped** (iv. 1. 127).

**disfigure** (iii. 1. 53), Quince's mistake for *figure*, 'represent'.

**distemperature** (ii. 1. 106), disorder of the weather. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**dowager** (i. 1. 5, 157), a widow with a jointure or *dowage*, charged on an estate. *Dowage* is from the Fr. *douer*, Lat. *dotare*, endow, + the termination *age*, Lat. *-aticum*.

**dulcet** (ii. 1. 151), sweet.

**eglantine** (ii. 1. 252), sweet-brier. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**eke** (iii. 1. 84), also. Only used by Shakespeare in burlesque. It is connected with the verb *eke*, augment, increase.

**elf** (ii. 1. 17; ii. 2. 5), a small supernatural being, the Ger. *alb*.

**exposition** (iv. 1. 36), Bottom's mistake for *disposition*.

**eyne** (i. 1. 242, &c.), a plural form of *eye*, used generally for the sake of rhyme. The plural ending *-ne* or *-en*, the A.S. *-an*, is retained in such words as *children*, *oxen*, *kine*, &c.

**fair** (i. 1. 181), fairness, beauty; for the use of the noun cf. *As You Like It*, iii. 2. 81, 82—

"Let no fair be kept in mind  
But the fair of Rosalind".

**fairy** (ii. 1. 8, &c.), originally a trisyllable, *faërie* or *faëry*; the Fr. *fée*, an abstract noun derived from *fée*, a fay, the L.L. *fata*; (1) 'fairy land' or 'the fairy folk' or 'enchantment'; (2) 'a fairy' or 'fay'; (3) belonging to a fairy, an adjective.

**fantasy** (i. 1. 32; v. 1. 5), or **fancy** (i. 1. 155; ii. 1. 164; v. 1. 25), a corrupt form of the same word, (1) imagination; (2) love, especially the imaginative love of youth.

**favour**, (1) good-will, graciousness; (2) (i. 1. 186) countenance,

looks, apparently as expressive of graciousness, though 'ill-favoured' came to be also used; (3) (ii. 1. 12; iv. 1. 46) a flower, riband, or other token of good-will, given by a gracious lady.

**fell**, subst. (v. 1. 220), skin. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**fell**, adj. (ii. 1. 20; v. 1. 274), angry, cruel.

**flewed** (iv. 1. 117). **Flews** are the overhanging chaps of a hound.

**fond** (ii. 1. 266, &c.), (1) tender; (2) foolish. In ii. 2. 88; iii. 2. 114, 317, both meanings appear to be in Shakespeare's mind.

**gaud** (i. 1. 33; iv. 1. 164), toy, trinket, jewel; from Lat. *gaudium*, delight, used in L. L. for an ornament.

**gleek** (iii. 1. 132), gibe, chaff; originally it appears to have meant 'trick', 'beguile', and to be connected with the A. S. *gelæcan*, play.

**goblin** (iii. 2. 399), a tricky spirit; from O. F. *gobelin*, L. L. *gobelinus*, dim. of *cobalus*, the Gk. *κόβαλος*, rogue.

**gossip** (ii. 1. 47), originally a god-mother, one who is *sib* or 'related' in God; and then 'a talkative person'. So too the verb in ii. 1. 125.

**grain** (i. 2. 81), the red dye of the kermes or coccus insect, called from its appearance *granum* or seed. This was a particularly lasting dye, and so *in grain* came to mean 'durable', 'permanent'. Thus Olivia of her complexion in *Twelfth Night*, i. 5. 253: "'Tis in grain, sir, 't will endure wind and weather'". In the present passage we have the primary sense, "purple in grain" = 'dyed purple with kermes'.

**griffin** (ii. 1. 232), a fabulous monster, described by Sir John Mandeville as having the head of an eagle and the body of a lion. The name comes through the Lat.

*gryphus*, from the Gk. *γρύψ*, a creature with a hooked beak.

**grisly** (v. 1. 138), terrible.

**harbinger** (iii. 2. 380), fore-runner; M. E. *herbergeour*, O. F. *herberger*, one who provided lodgings for a man of rank.

**henchman** (ii. 1. 121), a personal attendant or page; probably derived from A. S. *hengstman*, horseman. The henchmen were a regular part of the English royal household from the time of Henry VI. to that of Henry VIII.

**hight** (v. 1. 138), is called. According to Skeat it is the only English verb with a passive sense. It is only used by Shakespeare in burlesque.

**humour** (i. 2. 21), disposition. The four chief types of disposition, the sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic, were supposed to depend on the preponderance of various humours in the blood.

**immediately** (i. 1. 45), precisely, exactly.

**impeach** (ii. 1. 214), lay open to reproach. Cf. *Richard II.*, i. 1. 189: "Shall I...with pale beggar-fear impeach my height". From the Fr. *empêcher*, Lat. *impedicare*, catch by the foot.

**injury** (ii. 1. 147), insult. So too **injurious** (iii. 2. 195), insulting.

**intend** (iii. 2. 333), offer; in the sense of the Lat. *intendere*, lit. hold out.

**interlude** (i. 2. 5; v. 1. 154), originally an entertainment or *ludus*, between (the Lat. *inter*) the courses of a banquet or stages of a festival; and so a dramatic moral or comedy, since such were often played on such occasions. Here, for instance, *The Interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe* is played 'between our after-supper and bedtime' (v. 1. 34).



**Jill** (iii. 2. 461), a shortened form of Julia or Juliana.

**jole** (iii. 2. 338), jowl or jaw.

**juvenal** (iii. 1. 97), youth; an affected term, ridiculed by Shakespeare here and in *Love's Labour's Lost*, i. 2. 12-16—

"*Moth*. Why tender juvenal? why tender juvenal?"

*Armado*. I spoke it, tender juvenal, as a congruent epitheton appertaining to thy young days, which we may nominate tender."

Shakespeare seems to connect the word with *juvenis*, but Greene and Meres apply it to Nash in the sense of 'satirist', from the Roman poet so named.

**knot-grass** (iii. 2. 329), a low-growing kind of buckwheat. Cf. note *ad loc*.

**lakin** (iii. 1. 14). In the phrase *berlaken* or *byrlakin*, a corruption of 'ladikin' or 'little lady', the Virgin Mary.

**latch** (iii. 2. 36), anoint, moisten; connected by Skeat with *leak* and A.S. *leccan*, to wet. Shakespeare also uses another *latch*, derived from the A.S. *laeccan*, to catch; e.g. in *Macbeth*, iv. 3. 195—

"But I have words  
That would be howl'd out in the desert air,  
Where hearing should not latch them".

**leviathan** (ii. 1. 174), a whale, the general interpretation of the Hebrew *liwydhan* or 'monster'.

**load-star** (i. 1. 183), or **lode-star**, the pole-star, which 'leads', 'guides', or perhaps 'attracts the attention of' the sailor, as the load-stone or magnet leads or attracts iron. The pole-star is also called *arcturus*, and we may compare Milton's *L'Allegro*, 80—

"Where perhaps some beauty lies  
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes".

**lob** (ii. 1. 16), clown, lout; connected with 'lubber' and the Welsh *llob*, dolt.

**margent** (ii. 1. 85), margin.

**marry** (i. 2. 11), an exclamation

denoting indignation, scorn, or vehement assertion; originally an invocation of the Virgin Mary, of whose name it is a corruption.

**marshal** (ii. 2. 123), an officer of court, an usher who leads the way to the presence of; lit. a groom; the O. F. *mareschal*, O. H. G. *marescalh*, from *marah*, a horse + *scalh*, a servant.

**masque** (v. 1. 32), also spelt **mask**; an entertainment in which singing, dancing, and acting were combined; probably so called because the performers wore masks or vizards.

**mean** (v. 1. 311), complain, the M. E. *mene*, still used in the Scotch legal formula; "To the Lords of council and session humbly means and shows your petitioner".

**mechanical**, subst. (iii. 2. 9), artisan.

**mew** (i. 1. 71), cage up. The subst. **mew** = (1) the moulting of a hawk's feathers, from Lat. *mutare*, to change; (2) the cage in which this process took place.

**mimic** (iii. 2. 19), actor.

**minimus** (iii. 2. 329), smallest of size. It is the Lat. superlative, very small. Milton uses an Anglicized form in *Paradise Lost*, vii. 482: "minims of nature".

**misgrafted** (i. 1. 137), ill-grafted; but *graft* is a more correct form of the verb than *graft*. It is from the O. Fr. *graffe*, a slip.

**misprise** (iii. 2. 74), mistake; from the O. Fr. *mesprendre* = Lat. *minus* + *prehendere*, to take amiss. So too **misprision** (iii. 2. 90).

**momentary** (i. 1. 143), momentary; from Lat. *momentaneus*.

**morris** (ii. 1. 98), in the phrase 'nine men's morris'; the name of a game, probably a corruption of the Fr. *mereaux*, merrils. Cf. note *ad loc*.

**mural** (v. i. 204), an affected term for 'wall'.

**murrian** (ii. i. 97), pestilence; the L.L. *morina*, from *mori*, to die.

**musk-rose** (ii. i. 252; ii. 2. 3; iv. 1. 3), a large single rose, the *Rosa moschata*. Cf. note on ii. i. 252.

**neaf** (iv. i. 18), or **neif**, fist; of Scand. origin, the Icel. *hnafi*; connected with Gk. *κνέμειν*, to crook, and therefore meaning lit. 'closed hand'. Cf. 2 *Henry IV.*, ii. 4. 200: "Sweet knight, I kiss thy neif".

**neeze** (ii. i. 56), a variant form of *sneeze*, just as we have both *lightly* and *slightly*, *quinsy* and *squinancy*.

**nole** (iii. 2. 17), head; probably a form of *noddle*, which is a dim. of *knod*, a variant form of *knot*.

**oes** (iii. 2. 188), spangles, circles like the letter O. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**orange-tawny** (i. 2. 81; iii. i. 113), dark-yellow: *tawny* is *tanné*, tanned.

**ounce** (ii. 2. 30), a species of panther, used for hunting deer.

**ousel** (iii. i. 112), a blackbird.

**owe** (ii. 2. 79), possess, a variant form of *own* (*ow-e-n*).

**pageant** (iii. 2. 114), spectacle; from L.L. *pagina*, scaffold (*pangere*, fasten together): originally applied to the movable wooden scaffolds on which the mysteries or miracle-plays were shown; thence to dramatic and pseudo-dramatic performances themselves.

**paragon** (iv. 2. 13), model, pattern; from Span. *para con*, in comparison with, and thus ultimately from three Latin prepositions, *pro*, *ad* (= *para*), *cum*.

**pard** (ii. 2. 31), leopard.

**parlous** (iii. i. 12), a corrupt pronunciation of *perilous*. Cf. Essay on Metre, § 8 (ii) (c).

**passing** (ii. i. 20), extremely; used, like 'exceeding', as a superlative.

**pat** (iii. i. 2; v. i. 189), exactly, precisely, to the point.

**patch** (iii. 2. 9), clown, fool; either from the patched or motley dress of the professional fool. Cf. *The Tempest*, iii. 2. 71: "What a pied ninny's this! thou scurvy patch"; or from the Ital. *pazzo*, connected with Lat. *fatuus*, foolish. The 'patched fool' of iv. i. 205 favours the first explanation.

**patent** (i. i. 80), privilege; so called from the royal warrant or open letter (*lettres patentes*) in which privileges were conferred.

**pelting** (ii. i. 91), petty, insignificant; perhaps from *pelt* or *peltry* (Lat. *pellis*, skin; and thus akin to *paltry*, from Scand. *palter*, rags. Cf. *Lear*, ii. 3. 18: "poor pelting villages", and *Richard II.*, ii. i. 60: "a tenement or pelting farm").

**pensioner** (ii. i. 10), one who receives a *pension* or periodical payment, the Lat. *pensio*, from *pendere*, to pay, lit. to weigh out. Elizabeth had a corps of young nobles and others to attend her under the style of Pensioners. They were fifty in number, with a gay uniform and gilt halberds.

**period** (v. i. 96), full stop.

**pert** (i. i. 13), lively, sprightly.

**point**, (1) (i. 2. 8; ii. 2. 119), the summit of perfection; (2) (v. i. 18), a stop.

**prefer** (iv. 2. 34), either 'choose' or 'offer', as in *Julius Caesar*, iii. i. 28: "let him...prefer his suit to Caesar". Cf. note *ad loc.*

**present** (iii. 2. 14), act.

**prologue** (v. i. 106, 119), the introduction to a play; from the *πρόλογος* (*pro*, before, *lógos*, speech) of a Greek drama, viz. the opening

scene, in which the audience were regularly initiated into the situation of the characters.

**proper** (i. 2. 74), fine.

**properties** (i. 2. 90), a technical term for furniture and other articles used on the stage. The accounts of the churchwardens at Basingborne for the performance of a play of St. George as early as 1511 include an item "To the garnement-man for garnements and propyrts".

**purple in grain** (i. 2. 81), purple dyed with the juice of the kermes insect. Cf. **grain**.

**quaint** (ii. 1. 99; ii. 2. 7), trim, neat; the French *coint*. This sense is really due to a misunderstanding of *coint*, which is really the Lat. *cognitus*, well-known, but was taken for the Lat. *comptus*, adorned.

**quern** (ii. 1. 36), hand-mill; the A.S. *cweorn*.

**quire** (ii. 1. 55), or **choir**; properly a company of singers, the Gk. *χοῖρος*, and so, as here, a company of any kind.

**recorder** (v. 1. 123), a kind of small flute. Cf. Chappell, *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, p. 246.

**recreant** (iii. 2. 409), coward; lit. one who recants his faith. *Miscreant*, which originally meant 'heretic', came, by the same characteristic mediæval confusion of ideas, to signify 'scoundrel'.

**rere-mouse** (ii. 2. 4), a bat; the A.S. *hrêre-mus*, from *hrêran*, to agitate. The name is thus equivalent to *flitter-mouse*.

**respect** (ii. 1. 209, 224), consideration, opinion; so too the verb in i. 1. 160 means consider, regard.

**rheumatic** (ii. 1. 105), due to a superfluity of humours (cf. *s.v. humour*), from Gk. *ῥέυμα*, a humour, *ῥεῖν*, to flow. The term included colds, catarrhs, &c., as well as what we call rheumatism.

**right** (iii. 2. 302), regular, proper.

**roundel** (ii. 2. 1), a dance in a round or circle.

**rule** (iii. 2. 5), in the phrase *night-rule*; probably 'order'. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**russet** (iii. 2. 21) (1), grey, the colour of the scales on a russet apple; (2) reddish, as in *Hamlet*, i. 1. 166: "But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad".

**sanded** (iv. 1. 117), of sandy colour.

**scrip** (i. 2. 3), a piece of writing; from Lat. *scribere*, to write.

**self** (i. 1. 113), in the compound **self-affairs**; originally it was an adjective, meaning 'same' (connected with Germ. *selbe*), and was added to a repeated pronoun to identify it with that which went before. Thus "He killed himself" = "He killed him" (the *same* him). In time *self* acquired the meaning of "one's own self", and in compounds may denote any reference to oneself. Thus *self-affairs* = one's private affairs.

**sheen** (ii. 1. 29), fairness; from M.E. adjective *schene*, fair, A.S. *scène*, allied to *sceawian*, to show. According to Skeat, the word is not connected with *shine*, which is the A.S. *scinan*.

**shrewd**, (1) (ii. 1. 33), mischievous; (2) (iii. 2. 323), shrewish. It means literally 'cursed', being the past part. of *schrewen*, to curse, and may therefore be used in a variety of bad senses. The modern half-complimentary sense of 'sharp' is rare in Shakespeare.

**sinister** (v. 1. 162), left; cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, iv. 5. 127—

"my mother's blood  
Runs on the dexter cheek, and this sinister  
Bounds in my father's".

**sooth** (ii. 2. 129), truth.

**sort**, subst. (iii. 2. 21), a company; generally in a contemptuous

sense; e.g. *Richard III.*, v. 3. 316: "a sort of vagabonds"; 2 *Henry VI.*, iii. 2. 277: "a sort of tinkers".

**sort**, verb (iii. 2. 252), 'befall', 'fall out'; cf. *Hamlet*, i. 1. 109—"Well may it sort, that this portentous figure Comes armed through our watch".

**sphery** (ii. 2. 99), star-like. **Sphere**, which properly means the orbit of a star (cf. ii. 1. 7, note), came to be taken for the star itself.

**spleen** (i. 1. 146), a sudden impulse of passion; or sometimes of laughter. The passions were supposed to depend on the condition of the spleen.

**square** (ii. 1. 30), quarrel. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 13. 41: "Mine honesty and I begin to square".

**squash** (iii. 1. 167), an unripe peascod. Cf. *Twelfth Night*, i. 5. 165: "Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy; as a squash is before it is a peascod". The American squash or marrow is said to be a corruption of the Indian *asquutasquash*.

**sweet** (iii. 2. 32), in the contemptuous sense of the modern East-ender's "He's a beauty".

**tailor** (ii. 1. 54), probably 'thief'. Cf. note *ad loc.*

**tawny** (i. 2. 81; iii. 2. 264), dark; from Fr. *tanné*, tanned or stained; cf. *s.v.* *Orange-tawny*.

**throw** (ii. 1. 255), cast off, of a snake casting its slough.

**thrum** (v. 1. 276), explained by Nares as "the tufted part beyond the tie, at the end of the warp, in weaving". It appears to be a Scand. word for 'edge', Icel. *thrömr*, connected with Gk. *ρίγμα*, end, Lat. *terminus*.

**tiring-house** (iii. 1. 4), the attiring-house or green-room of a stage.

**touch** (iii. 2. 70), exploit; cf. the Fr. *coup*. This precise sense does not occur again in Shakespeare.

**trace** (ii. 1. 25), track, wander through. Cf. *Much Ado*, iii. 1. 16: "as we do trace this alley up and down"; and Milton, *Comus*, 423: "May trace huge forests and unharboured heaths".

**translate** (i. 1. 191; iii. 1. 122; 2. 32), transform.

**transport** (iv. 2. 4), carry away. It may possibly be intended of death, as in *Measure for Measure*, iv. 3. 72—

"to transport him in the mind he is  
Were damnable";

but more probably of enchantment. The modern penal sense is of later origin.

**triumph** (i. 1. 19), a public festivity or procession.

**troth** (ii. 2. 36, 42, 129), truth.

**tuneable** (i. 1. 184; iv. 1. 121), musical.

**vaward** (iv. 1. 102), morning or fore-part of the day. It is the same word as *vanward* and *van-guard*.

**videlicet** (v. 1. 311), that is to say; it is a Latin word, and = *videre*, to see + *licet*, it is allowed.

**villagery** (ii. 1. 35), village folk. For the termination cf. peasantry, infantry, &c.

**virtuous** (iii. 2. 367), powerful, efficacious; especially used of the virtue of herbs or medicines.

**votaress** (ii. 1. 123, 163), a nun, one bound to service by vows, Lat. *votum*.

**wanton**, (1) (ii. 1. 99), luxuriant. Cf. *Richard II.*, i. 3. 214: "Four lagging winters and four wanton springs"; (2) (ii. 1. 63, 129), amorous, often with some imputation of loose behaviour. The literal sense is 'unrestrained', from A.S. *wan*, a negative prefix, and *togen*, trained, educated.

**waxen** (ii. 1. 56), increase. The old plural termination *-en* was almost obsolete in Shakespeare's

time; it survived occasionally in the form *been* or *bin=are*. Cf. *Pericles*, ii. prol. 28: 'Wher when men been'; and Peele, *Arraignement of Paris*—

"My love is fair, my love is gay,  
As fresh as bin the flowers in May".

**weeds** (ii. i. 256; ii. 2. 71), clothes; from A.S. *wæd*.

**welkin** (iii. 2. 356), sky; lit. clouds, from M.E. *welken*, A.S. *wolcnu*, plural of *wolcen*, a cloud.

**wode** (ii. i. 192), mad, the A.S. *wōd*.

**woodbine** (ii. i. 251; iv. i. 39), a climbing plant, probably honey-suckle. Cf. notes *ad locc*.

**worm** (iii. 2. 71), serpent, especially one of small size. So in *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2. 242, an asp is called "the pretty worm of Nilus".

**wot** (iii. 2. 422; iv. i. 161), know; 1st sing. pres. of *wit*, the M.E. *witen*, A.S. *witan*.

## INDEX OF WORDS.

(The references are to the Notes *ad locc.* Other words will be found in the *Glossary.*)

- abridgment, v. I. 39.  
 after-supper, v. I. 34.  
 alone, iii. 2. 119.  
 amiable, v. i. 2.  
 antipodes, iii. 2. 55.  
 argument, iii. 2. 242.  
 artificial gods, iii. 2. 203.  
 bottle of hay, iv. I. 30.  
 by 'r lakin, iii. I. 12.  
 canker blossom, iii. 2. 282.  
 changeling, ii. I. 23.  
 chough, iii. 2. 21.  
 cobweb, iii. I. 164.  
 companion, i. I. 15.  
 cuckoo, iii. I. 120.  
 darkling, ii. 2. 86.  
 dead, iii. 2. 57.  
 dear, i. I. 249.  
 defect, iii. I. 35.  
 dewberries, iii. I. 150.  
 Dian's bud, iv. I. 70.  
 disfigure, iii. I. 53.  
 distemperature, ii. I. 106.  
 double, ii. 2. 9.  
 dove, sucking, i. 2. 70.  
 eglantine, ii. I. 252.  
 enforced, iii. I. 180.  
 estate, i. I. 98.  
 ever, i. I. 150.  
 exposition, iv. I. 36.  
 extortion, iii. 2. 169.  
 extremity, iii. 2. 3.  
 eyes, fiery, iii. I. 154.  
 faint, i. I. 215.  
 fairy-rings, ii. I. 9.  
 favours, iv. I. 46.  
 fearful, iii. I. 29.  
 fee, a lover's, iii. 2. 113.  
 fire, a, iii. I. 92.  
 generally, i. 2. 2.  
 God's my life, iv. I. 200.  
 gossip's bowl, a, ii. I. 47.  
 grace, ii. 2. 89.  
 hempen homespun, iii. I. 67.  
 increase (their), ii. I. 114.  
 interlude, i. 2. 5.  
 ivy, female, iv. I. 41.  
 Jew, iii. I. 84.  
 join in souls, iii. 2. 150.  
 kind, i. I. 54.  
 knight, a wandering, i. 2. 37.  
 knot-grass, iii. 2. 329.  
 lingers, i. I. 4.  
 love-in-idleness, ii. I. 168.  
 maypole, iii. 2. 296.  
 mazes, quaint, ii. I. 99.  
 mercy, iii. I. 160.  
 mimic, iii. 2. 19.  
 misprised, iii. 2. 74.  
 mortals, human, ii. I. 101.  
 moused, v. I. 259.  
 musk-roses, ii. I. 252; 2. 3; iv. I. 3.  
 night, since, iii. 2. 275.  
 night-rule, iii. 2. 5.  
 obscenely, i. 2. 92.  
 odours, iii. I. 74.  
 oxlips, ii. I. 250.  
 parted eye, iv. I. 86.  
 patched, iv. I. 205.  
 pensioners, ii. I. 10.  
 Philomel, ii. 2. 13.  
 plain-song, iii. I. 119.  
 present, iii. I. 53.  
 prologue, iii. I. 16.  
 prosperity, iv. I. 87.  
 quantity, i. I. 232.  
 recorder, v. I. 122.

revenue, i. 1. 6.  
self, i. 1. 113.  
should, iii. 2. 45.  
snuff, in, v. 1. 242.  
sort, iii. 2. 13.  
sphery, ii. 2. 99.  
squash, iii. 1. 167.  
stand upon points, v. 1. 119.  
stretched, v. 1. 59.  
sweet, iii. 2. 32.

tear a cat, i. 2. 23.  
thin, ii. 1. 109.  
thisne, i. 2. 44.  
tiring-house, iii. 1. 4.  
tongs, iv. 1. 27.  
versing, ii. 1. 67.  
virtuous, iii. 2. 367.  
ways, all, iv. 1. 38.  
woodbine, ii. 1. 251.

## GENERAL INDEX.

- Abbott, i. 1. 98, 164, 226, 231;  
2. 2, 18, 70, 80; ii. 1. 91, 138,  
146, 149, 195-197, 208, 221,  
244; iii. 1. 32, 39-163; 2.  
177; iv. 1. 163.
- accent, i. 1. 6, 151, 158; ii. 1. 78,  
105; iii. 2. 237.
- Addison, iv. 1. 121.
- adjectives, use of, i. 1. 80; 2. 18.
- Ægles, ii. 1. 78-80.
- Æneas, story of, i. 1. 73.
- Albertus Magnus, iii. 1. 92.
- alliteration, v. 1. 146, 264.
- All's Well That Ends Well*, v.  
1. 423.
- allusions, historical, ii. 1. 146-  
168.
- Amazons, ii. 1. 70.
- anachronism, i. 1. 70.
- Antiopa, ii. 1. 78-80.
- antithesis, i. 1. 31, 92, 194-201,  
200; ii. 1. 71-84.
- Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 2. 188.
- Apollo, ii. 1. 231.
- Ariadne, ii. 1. 78-80.
- Artemis-Diana, ii. 1. 158.
- As You Like It*, ii. 2. 118.
- Bacon, *Essays*, iii. 2. 188.
- Bailey, v. 1. 59.
- Beaumont and Fletcher, *Scorn-  
ful Lady*, i. 2. 23; *Knight of  
the Burning Pestle*, iii. 2. 329;  
*The Coxcomb*, iii. 2. 329.
- beauty in Elizabeth's time, iii. 2.  
257; v. 1. 11.
- Bennett, iii. 2. 21.
- Bergomask dance, v. 1. 340.
- Bible, the 1611, iii. 2. 177; iv.  
1. 206-209.
- biblical allusions, ii. 1. 268.
- Boccaccio, *De Claris Mulieribus*,  
i. 1. 133.
- Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, i. 1.  
167.
- broken lines, iii. 2. 29.
- Browning, ii. 1. 55; iii. 1. 119.
- Cadmus, iv. 1. 109.
- Carew, *Pastoral Dialogues*, ii. 1.  
15.
- Centaurs, v. 1. 44.
- Chalmers, v. 1. 9.
- Chapman, *Bussy D'Ambois*, ii.  
1. 158.
- Chapman and Shirley, *The Ball*,  
i. 2. 95.
- Chappell, *Popular Music of the  
Olden Time*, v. 1. 122.
- characterization, iii. 2. 177-344.
- Chaucer, *Knight's Tale*, i. 1. 16,  
167; iii. 2. 329; iv. 1. 116-  
124; v. 1. 51; *Marchant's  
Tale*, iii. 2. 101; *Troilus and  
Cressida*, i. 1. 67; *The Flower  
and the Leaf*, iv. 1. 70; *Roman  
de la Rose*, i. 1. 235; *Good  
Women*, i. 1. 33.
- clowns (Shakespeare's), i. 2. 2.
- Collier, iii. 1. 59, 73; 2. 144; v.  
1. 59, 205.
- colloquialisms, i. 2. 80.
- Comedy of Errors*, i. 1. 20, 127;  
iv. 1. 41.
- "companies of players", i. 2.  
intro.; v. 1. 125.
- "comparatives", i. 1. 76; double,  
ii. 1. 208; 2. 89; iii. 1. 18.
- "compressed phrases", i. 1. 152.
- conjunctions, use of, ii. 1. 21, 149.
- construction, "grammatical", i.  
1. 39, 135; ii. 1. 91, 250; 2.  
118; iii. 1. 42; 2. 87, 97; iv.  
1. 170; v. 1. 238.
- contradictions, ii. 1. 23 and 123;  
iii. 1. 67-94.



- Copland, iii. i. 92.  
 Corin, ii. i. 66-68.  
 Craik, G. L., iii. 2. 177.  
 Cunliffe, J. W., i. 2. 22.  
 Cupid, i. i. 235.  
 customs, contemporary, allusions to, v. i. 376.  
*Cymbeline*, i. i. 215; ii. i. 252; iii. 2. 379.  
 Dante, *Inferno*, v. i. 248-250.  
 Daphne, ii. i. 231.  
 dative, "ethic", i. 2. 70.  
 Day, Jno., *The Isle of Guls*, i. 2. 23.  
 Decker, *The Gull's Horn Book*, v. i. 107.  
 dialogue in play, i. i. 128-251.  
 Dido, i. i. 173.  
 Donne, iv. i. 137.  
 Douce, i. i. 235; iii. 2. 101, 213.  
 drama (Elizabethan), popularity of, i. 2. intro.; characteristics, i. 2. 22; v. i. 266; women's parts, i. 2. 39, 40.  
 Drayton, *Epistle to Reynolds*, v. i. 12, 13; *Nymphidia*, ii. i. 4-6; iii. 2. 25, 101.  
 Ebsworth, iii. 2. 19.  
 Edwardes, Richard, *Damon and Pythias*, v. i. 108, 266-267, 324.  
 Ellacombe, *Plant Lore of Shakespeare*, ii. i. 252; iv. i. 39-41.  
 emphasis, staccato, ii. 2. 108, 109.  
 epithets, ii. i. 84; iii. 2. 260, 288, 296, 365.  
 Erasmus, i. i. 70.  
 errors in natural history, iii. 2. 72.  
 Erymanthian boar, v. i. 44.  
 events, contemporary, allusions to, ii. i. 84-116; iii. i. 28; v. i. intro., 93, 94, 308-309.  
*Faerie Queen*, ii. i. 4-6.  
 faeries, character of, ii. i. 60, 84, 155, 186; 2. 2; iii. i. 78, 92, 98, 138; 2. 25, 120, 347, 355; iv. i. 83.  
 Farmer, ii. i. 56; iv. i. 70.  
 Faustus, Dr., iii. i. 9.  
 fickleness of men, iii. 2. 92, 93.  
 Fischer, R., i. 2. 22.  
 Fleay, i. i. 122; ii. 2. 3; iv. i. 210, 211.  
 Florio's *Montaigne*, iii. 2. 177.  
 Fowler, W. W., *Summer Studies of Birds and Books*, iii. i. 119.  
 Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i. i. 167.  
 Furness, ii. i. 54.  
 "genitive", middle English, ii. i. 7; inflected, iv. i. 93.  
 glow-worm, iii. i. 154.  
 Golding, Arthur, i. i. 70; iii. 2. 101.  
 Gomme, Alice B., *Traditional Games*, ii. i. 98.  
 Gower, *Confessio*, i. i. 133.  
 Greene, *A Maiden's Dream*, iv. i. 210, 211; *A Groat's Worth of Wit*, i. 2. 22.  
 Grey, ii. i. 109.  
 Halliwell, i. i. 165; 2. 44; ii. i. 4-6, 54, 55; iii. 2. 5; 2. 113.  
*Hamlet*, i. i. 232; 2. 23, 39, 40; ii. i. 103, 104; iii. i. 16; 2. 381-387; iv. i. 19; 2. 14.  
 Hanmer, i. i. 187; ii. i. 101; iii. 2. 13, 54, 144; iv. i. 32, 33; v. i. 59.  
 Harvey, Gabriel, ii. i. 15.  
 Heath, i. i. 216-219.  
 Hecate, the triple, v. i. 370.  
 Heminges, v. i. 25.  
*Henry IV.*, i. 2. 2; iii. 2. 282.  
*Henry V.*, i. i. 216-219; iii. i. 16; 2. 188; v. i. 85, 106.  
*Henry VI.*, iii. 2. 97.  
 Henry, Prince of Scotland, christening of, iii. i. 28.  
 Henslowe's *Diary*, i. 2. 22.  
 "herbals", Turner, Lyte, Gerard, Linacres, iv. i. 39-41.  
 Hercules, v. i. 44.  
 Herr, v. i. 59.  
 Herrick, i. i. 167; ii. i. 168.  
 Heywood, Jasper, i. i. 226; 2. 22.  
*Histriomastix*, i. 2. 23.  
 Holland, *Translation of Ammi-  
 anus Marcellinus*, i. i. 165.

- humour of play, iv. 1. 206-209;  
v. 1. 278, 300.  
initial syllable, omission of, iii.  
2. 351.  
irony, iii. 1. 133.  
it, possessive of, iii. 2. 177.  
James I. of Scotland, *Kings  
Quair*, i. 1. 170.  
jests, collection of, by Sir Nicho-  
las L'Estrange, iii. 1. 19.  
Johnson, Dr., ii. 1. 54; iii. 1.  
105, 106; iii. 2. 25.  
Joicey, G., iii. 2. 257, 258.  
Jonson, Ben, iii. 1. 16; iv. 1.  
39-41; *Cynthia's Revels*, v. 1.  
82, 83.  
Kempe, Will, i. 2. 2.  
Kenilworth, iii. 1. 19.  
*King Lear*, ii. 2. 86.  
Kinnear, v. 1. 59.  
Kirkby and Spence, *Entomology*,  
iv. 1. 13.  
Kyd, *Spanish Tragedy*, iii. 1.  
116.  
Lamb, Charles, iii. 2. 384.  
Lapithæ, v. 1. 44.  
lines, rhymed, ii. 1. 14, 15, 41, 42.  
lines beginning alike, ii. 1. 136.  
Lodge, *Wit's Miserie and the  
World's Madnesse, etc.*, v. 1. 9.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, i. 2. intro.,  
22; ii. 2. 122; iii. 2. 461; v. 1.  
108, 146, 419.  
Lyly, i. 1. 70; v. 1. 46.  
Lyricism, i. 1. 171.  
*Macbeth*, ii. 2. 6, 11.  
Malone, i. 1. 135; ii. 1. 106; 2.  
104; iii. 1. 19, 28, 116.  
Markham, *Country Contentment*,  
iv. 1. 121; *English Arcadia*,  
v. 1. 419.  
Marlowe, i. 2. 22; *Hero and  
Leander*, v. 1. 195.  
Marshall, iii. 2. 203-214.  
Marston, *Parasitaster*, ii. 1. 55.  
Masson's Milton, ii. 1. 7.  
*Merry Wives of Windsor*, iii. 1.  
105.  
metaphor, i. 1. 145-149; 2. 95.  
metre, trochaic, use of, ii. 2.  
27-34.  
Milton, iii. 2. 177, 329, 380;  
*Paradise Lost*, i. 1. 132, 149,  
207; ii. 1. 39; v. 1. 37, 238;  
*Comus*, ii. 1. 29, 69; *Il Pen-  
seroso*, iii. 2. 379; *Lycidas*, v.  
1. 48; *L'Allegro*, ii. 1. 33-38,  
252; iii. 2. 391; *Ode on the  
Nativity*, iii. 2. 381-387; *On  
the Death of a Fair Infant*, iii.  
2. 384; *Vacation Exercise*, v.  
1. 387.  
miracle plays, i. 2. 22.  
Moon, ii. 1. 103, 104, 156; iii. 1.  
181.  
Mrs. Malaprop, i. 2. 2; iii. 1. 73.  
*Much Ado about Nothing*, iii. 2.  
282; iv. 1. 39-41.  
mysteries and moralities, iii. 2.  
421.  
Narcissus, i. 2. intro.  
Nash, ii. 1. 15; *Summer's Last  
Will*, iii. 1. 138.  
Nichols, *Progresses of Elizabeth*,  
v. 1. 2, 22.  
Nine Men's Morris, ii. 1. 98.  
Orpheus, v. 1. 48.  
*Othello*, i. 1. 231; ii. 2. 154.  
Ovid, iv. 1. 3; *Heroides*, i. 1.  
133; *Metamorphoses*, i. 1. 170;  
ii. 1. 168, 231; v. 1. 48.  
oxymoron, i. 2. 9, 10, 44; v. 1.  
56-60.  
pastoral, first English, ii. 1. 66-68.  
pathos, i. 1. 149.  
Peele, *Old Wives' Tale*, v. 1. 318.  
*Pericles*, v. 1. 93, 94.  
Perigenia, ii. 1. 78-80.  
Perring, v. 1. 59.  
person, change of, ii. 1. 35, 36.  
Phillida, ii. 1. 66-68.  
Phoebe, iii. 2. 55.  
Plutarch, v. 1. 44; North's, i.  
1. 70; ii. 1. 70, 195-197.  
Pope, ii. 1. 32, 249; 2. 77; iii.  
1. 181; 2. 80; iv. 1. 32, 33.  
preposition, use of, ii. 1. 244; 2.  
154; iii. 1. 39-44, 163; iv. 1.

- 178; omission of, i. 1. 164; ii. 1. 235.
- Preston, Thomas, i. 2. 9, 10; iv. 2. 18.
- prologue, iii. 1. 16; use of in Elizabethan drama, v. 1. 106.
- pronunciation, ii. 1. 263, 264; v. 1. 197-201.
- prose and blank verse, use of, iv. 1. 1-42.
- Ptolemaic system, ii. 1. 7.
- punctuation, ii. 1. 220, 221; iii. 1. 92; iv. 1. 39-41; v. 1. 107.
- puns, i. 2. 69, 83; iii. 2. 188; v. 1. 236, 297, 317.
- Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie*, v. 1. 146.
- Pyramus, iii. 1. 84; v. 1. 108.
- Ray, *English Proverbs*, iii. 2. 463.
- relation between ideas, expression of, iii. 2. 203.
- rhymes, bad, v. 162, 163; rhymed lines, ii. 1. 14, 15; 42, 43.
- Richard II.*, i. 1. 216-219; ii. 1. 51; 2. 20; iii. 1. 154; 2. 55.
- Ritson, iii. 2. 19.
- Rolfe, i. 1. 235.
- Romeo and Juliet*, i. 1. 147; 2. 9, 10; ii. 2. 122; iii. 1. 16; v. 1. 323, 338.
- Rose Theatre, the, i. 2. 22.
- Rowe, iii. 2. 451.
- scansion, i. 1. 24, 26, 27, 69; ii. 1. 14, 15, 32, 41, 42, 58, 79, 113, 249, 251; 2. 27-34, 77, 156; iii. 2. 201, 204, 282, 292; iv. 1. 32, 33, 104, 163, 189; v. 1. 59.
- Scott, iii. 1. 19.
- Seneca's tragedies, i. 2. 22.
- Sharpham, Edward, *The Fleir*, v. 1. 332.
- Sheridan, *School for Scandal*, i. 2. 2; iii. 1. 73.
- Sidney, *Arcadia*, i. 1. 170; *Astrophel and Stella*, v. 1. 146.
- Smith, G. C. Moore, ii. 1. 91.
- sonnets, iii. 2. 282, 392.
- sonneteers, Elizabethan, iii. 2. 137-144.
- Spalding, iii. 2. 201.
- spelling, i. 1. 31; ii. 1. 54, 55; iii. 1. 12, 92.
- spiders, ii. 2. 20.
- Staunton, v. 1. 264.
- Steevens, ii. 1. 102; iv. 2. 18; v. 1. 419.
- stichomuthia, i. 1. 194-201.
- Stow, John, *A Survey of London*, iii. 2. 5.
- Stubbe's *Anatomie of Abuses*, iii. 2. 296.
- substantives, words used as, i. 1. 226.
- suicides, after death, iii. 2. 383.
- Sweet, iii. 2. 177.
- Taming of the Shrew*, i. 1. 232.
- Tawyer, v. 1. 125.
- Taylor, the Water Poet, iv. 1. 39-41.
- Tempest*, i. 1. 98; 2. 23; ii. 1. 9, 84-116; v. 1. 423.
- textual notes, i. 1. 4, 8, 10, 24, 26, 27, 135, 139, 143, 159, 182, 187, 216; 2. 8, 18; ii. 1. 4-6, 33, 46, 54, 56, 69, 79, 91, 101-103, 101, 109, 190, 251; 2. 104, 113, 150; iii. 1. 59, 73, 92, 127, 128, 181; 2. 13, 19, 54, 80, 144, 150, 201, 213, 214, 250, 257, 258, 344, 415, 418, 451; iv. 1. 27, 39-41, 46, 70, 87, 170, 189, 190; v. 1. 38, 42, 43, 125, 205, 220, 264, 294, 308, 309, 318, 358, 386, 405, 406.
- Theobald, i. 1. 135, 200; ii. 1. 251; iii. 2. 213, 214, 250; iv. 1. 38, 110; v. 1. 318, 311, 358.
- The Roaring Girl*, i. 2. 23.
- Theseus, character of, v. 1. 2-22.
- The Vision of Piers Plowman*, v. 1. 146.
- The Wisdome of Dr. Dodypoll*, ii. 1. 15.
- Thirlby, ii. 1. 190; iv. 1. 70.

Thisbe, iii. i. 84; iv. i. 213;  
     v. i. 108.  
*Through the Looking Glass*, iv.  
     i. 31.  
 Tithonus, iii. 2. 389.  
 titles of Elizabethan plays, i. 2.  
     9, 10.  
 "time", i. i. 83, 164; 2. 86; ii.  
     i. 82; iii. i. 48.  
 "to", omission of, ii. i. 138.  
 Tottel's *Miscellany*, ii. i. 66-68.  
*Twelfth Night*, i. i. 170; ii. 2.  
     154; iii. 2. 5.  
*Two Noble Kinsmen*, i. 2. intro.;  
     iii. 2. 203-214.

Tyrwhitt, ii. i. 109.  
 Udall, Nicholas, *Roister Doister*,  
     v. i. 107.  
 Upton, v. i. 59.  
*Venus and Adonis*, i. i. 135; iv.  
     i. 116-124.  
 Venus' cestus, i. i. 172; doves,  
     i. i. 171.  
 Vesta, ii. i. 158.  
 Walker, ii. 2. 77.  
 Warburton, iv. i. 39-41, 189.  
 White of Selborne, iii. i. 119.  
*Winter's Tale*, i. i. 215; 2. 151;  
     ii. i. 103, 104, 250; v. i. 4.



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